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THE FINAL FAITH



# THE FINAL FAITH

A STATEMENT OF  
THE NATURE AND AUTHORITY OF CHRISTIANITY  
AS THE RELIGION OF THE WORLD

BY

W. DOUGLAS MACKENZIE

M.A.(EDIN.), D.D.(YALE AND EDIN.), LL.D.(PRINCETON)

PRESIDENT OF HARTFORD THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

AUTHOR OF "JOHN MACKENZIE: SOUTH AFRICAN MISSIONARY AND STATESMAN"  
"THE ETHICS OF GAMBLING" ETC.



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GENERAL

TO  
THE BELOVED MEMORY  
OF THE  
REV. WILLIAM HOWARD CAMPBELL, M.A., B.D.  
OF SOUTH INDIA  
WHO, AS EVANGELIST AND TEACHER, PHILOSOPHER AND NATURALIST  
LINGUIST AND AUTHOR  
FOR TWENTY-FIVE YEARS GAVE HIS GREAT AND  
VARIED POWERS WITHOUT RESERVE TO THE EXTENSION OF  
THE FINAL FAITH  
AND HIMSELF ENTERED INTO ITS HEAVENLY FULFILMENT  
ON  
FEBRUARY 18TH, 1910

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## PREFACE

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THE following chapters have been written under the conviction that the Christian Religion has come to one of the great crises in its history. The recent World Missionary Conference, held at Edinburgh, has borne ample testimony that this conviction is widespread among the missionaries and other leading servants of the Gospel.

No need of the hour is greater than that many attempts should be made to define or describe the Christian Faith as it confronts the great world with its claims and promises, its sense of universal authority, its assertion that in and through its own nature as a historical Fact and its own message as a Divine Fact, the will of God is dealing with the destiny of mankind. For the sake of the missionaries abroad and the ministry in Christian lands, for the sake of all who are called upon to support and promote in any way the work of converting the world to this one Faith, these attempts are of essential importance. We must be sure that our task is not the offspring of blind prejudice or Western pride. We cannot go on with it intelligently and earnestly unless we are in our own souls assured, not that Christianity is a better religion than any other, but that it is the absolute religion, the one final way in which God

## PREFACE

Himself is concerned with the saving and perfecting of mankind.

This book is intended to be a contribution to that work, one of the many attempts which the present author believes that theologians and preachers must and will make to expound Christianity afresh to this generation as the true religion of the world. It is sent out in the hope that it may be used as a Handbook by many of those who are, in growing numbers, fired with missionary enthusiasm, for strengthening their own faith and for lighting the same fire in other hearts.

It may be added, for the sake of some readers, that the successive Christian doctrines discussed in these papers have been selected solely because of their close relation to the central theme and object of the book. The exposition of these topics does not follow a uniform plan. In each case it is concerned with those aspects of the subject which it seemed important to emphasise in the presence of the "modern mind," and in view of the special aim of the whole work.

The influence of Christianity on the social evolution of man, while briefly referred to in the following pages, has been more fully illustrated in an earlier volume entitled "Christianity and the Progress of Man."

W. DOUGLAS MACKENZIE.

Ivy Lodge,  
Gullane, Scotland,  
*July 26th, 1910.*



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“If Nature is practically trustworthy, and fit to be scientifically reasoned about, the Omnipotent Spirit immanent in it must be perfectly good and design the goodness of all. This is final faith.”—Professor A. CAMPBELL FRASER, D.C.L.





# THE FINAL FAITH

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## CHAPTER I

### THE THREE MISSIONARY RELIGIONS

**C**HRISTIANITY occupies in the twentieth century a relation to the whole world strikingly similar to that which it occupied, during the first three centuries of its history, towards the Roman Empire. In none of the leading nations is the Christian faith forced upon the formal or outward acceptance of their citizens by the authority of the State. In one of them at least, namely, France, there is something like a return to the hostile and persecuting attitude of ancient Rome. The Church faces the world to-day with a fresh and solemn consciousness not only of its divine mission, but also of its dependence for success upon the sole authority of the truth by which it lives, and upon the power of that Spirit of God through which Christ rules the hearts of men. Even its use of the Bible, which it believes to be the Word of God and the vessel of truth, has been made by modern methods of study to resemble the use made by

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the early Church of the witness of the Apostles, when as yet the New Testament had not been gathered into a canon.

On the other hand, the progress of missionary work during the nineteenth century, combined with the scholarly investigation of the religions of the world, has opened the eyes of devout Christians to facts which were not known a hundred years ago, but were more familiar in the first century. The early Christians lived in the midst of heathenism. They were surrounded not only by its monstrous evils, but by evidences of the power of a true religious spirit even when working amid degraded beliefs and practices. They knew many non-Christians who were not corrupt in life, some who cherished virtue and were "feeling after God if haply they might find Him" (Acts xvii. 26-28; Rom. ii. 6-16). They recognised in certain forms of religious thought the outworking of that long-hidden light of the world which had appeared fully and gloriously in the Person of Jesus Christ (John i. 9, 10). We have come back to something like this standpoint. We recognise in the universal fact of religion a witness to man's essential nature as a spiritual being. We recognise in the nobler movements of his spirit a proof that he has not been deserted of God, but that everywhere and always the Divine Spirit has been concerned with the production in his moral and religious experience of whatsoever things are true and honourable, just and good, lovely and of good report.

Nevertheless the Church of Christ, while fair to the

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truth in all religions, cannot be true to its origin and its nature, to that very faith which holds it living to-day, without the conviction that in the message of Christ's gospel and there alone is the secret of salvation disclosed to all mankind. Christianity has from the very first claimed to be the supreme power of God for the saving of souls and the perfecting of human nature. When, therefore, the earnest Christian believer studies the missionary situation of to-day, he is brought in the sure course of thought to ask himself why the Spirit of Christ demands of him the surrender of life and means to the cause of missions, and the obedience of all nations. Behind all these fascinating biographies of missionaries, behind the story of the great missionary societies and of their triumph in many lands and of their ill-success in others, there must be some field of study which will account for it all. The missionary student therefore desires something more systematic in his understanding of Christianity as truth. He wishes to know the real grounds for the claim of this faith that it must exercise supreme moral and spiritual authority over all minds and all consciences throughout the world, and to the very end of time. It is only when these deep, inner reasons for the absolute and universal nature of the Christian religion have been deeply and inwardly grasped that missionary fervour will break out into a great flame of generous, intelligent, yet passionate and sacrificial service.

It is in pursuit of this result that the following studies

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of Christian truth have been prepared. But we must remember our day and the air we breathe. Therefore we must begin our study by connecting the Christian religion with the fact of religion in general, as a universal human instinct ; and especially we must take account of those religions which have, like Christianity, made some claim to finality, and have for that reason sought to win the world to themselves.

### I. THE RISE OF MISSIONARY RELIGIONS

1. *Religion*.—Modern research has made it clear that religion is as real a product of human nature as language. It is as natural to worship as to speak. This has been abundantly proved by such facts as these : that religious phenomena are universal in the history of man, that they accompany every kind and grade of social organisation, that they have been always closely connected with and have been ever regarded as sustaining those forms of conduct which were essential to the structure of society, that they always express in some more or less systematic way the highest explanation which has been reached of the meaning of human life and the destiny of men. Even the poorest religion of the poorest savages represents their thought about the supreme powers which control the fortunes of their tribe and the kind of tribal conduct which those powers punish or reward. Religion is therefore the inevitable result of that intelligence with which man is endowed, and which he brings to bear not



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only upon the momentary exigencies, but the general meaning and final outcome of our life. Its origin is as far back as all the fundamental acts of the human consciousness, its course is intertwined with the whole varied history of man, and its final form must somehow be bound up with that consummation towards which the will of God is directing the successive generations.

2. *The Rise of Missionary Religions.*—It is a remarkable fact that while every race and tribe has possessed religious beliefs and engaged in religious practices, only three religions have appeared which engaged in deliberate, organised, and persistent missionary labour. Some races have held, indeed, certain ideas in common and developed similar forms of worship; but this has been due either to a common inheritance or to the force of imitation, and not to the missionary spirit. Some religions, again, like Brahmanism in its earliest descent upon South India, like Judaism in the times of Christ, and Mithraism at a later date, have felt a temporary wave of this enthusiasm; but in such cases it has been only partial in its conception and has been speedily sterilised by mightier movements. In fact, it has ever been recognised, except in these three cases, that each people should have its own gods (or god) who presided over its fortunes and identified themselves with its life. Every reader of the Old Testament is familiar with the fact that in early times in Israel the mass of the people regarded Jehovah as their God in exactly the same sense as Chemosh was God of Moab. On the other hand, certain great objects, such as

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the sun and the moon, and natural processes such as the seasons and the principle of reproduction, have been worshipped by many races, being connected with deities who resided in or presided over and directed them. But the worship of these great powers, while widely extended in East and West, did not destroy the worship of national or clan deities. Manifestly there could be no place for missionary work under such conditions. In one way a heathen cult might be spread. For, when deities were looked upon as national, their glory was regarded as bound up with the growth and prosperity of their favoured people. Hence armies were roused to a white-heat of devotion by the idea that their gods were spectators of the strife, and that more than human honour was at stake in their triumph or their defeat; and conquered races bowed before the gods of their conquerors, thus swelling the numbers of their worshippers. In this manner, no doubt, a religion may be said to have been extended.

But the true missionary religion is of another type altogether. It is propagated from one race to another, becomes really international, in a manner entirely new. Such a religion can only be spread because its believers find in it a supreme good not only for their own but for all peoples, and feel in their hearts an inward compulsion, an irresistible necessity to go forth as its heralds to all the world. They are not working for the glory of their nation, any more than they are working for their own personal advancement or enrichment in earthly things.

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A missionary religion is one which is fitted to become the supreme end, the absorbing enthusiasm of strong and vigorous natures, who surrender their lives to its claims, and who are convinced that no better thing can happen to all men than that they should all make the same surrender and experience the same glorious and absolute obligations. It carries with it, therefore, a new view of man, in which racial and national distinctions give way to something wider and deeper. It reveals some doctrine of man which compels him who really believes it to regard every human being with a new interest. It teaches him to see the highest as well as the lowest of our race in the light of a great and commanding hope, stretching beyond mere temporal achievements. It plants in his breast the fire of that hope for himself, and also a strange new fire more sacred than any which priests have lit and conserved on any altar : the burning desire and the set will to kindle it in other men anywhere, everywhere.

In the language of our day, it must be said that the rise of the missionary impulse marks one of the greatest stages in the evolution of humanity. It means that the spirit of man has been released from some more of the bonds which held it captive to the merely individual, local, temporal, brutal instincts and endeavours. The long journey towards the kingdom of the divine life has entered upon a new phase. The reality and glory of the universal spirit of man has come into view, and its life has become the one supreme good, its fulfilment in all souls the one fascinating pursuit of elect souls. God's great

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work of creating a kingdom of pure intelligences has begun to appear before the eyes of these pioneers of humanity, the seers and leaders of the race ; and they have entered upon the sublime task which without their vision and their will cannot be fulfilled.

3. *The three Missionary Religions.*—Sometimes men write as if the universalism of a religion, the quality which makes it a missionary religion, were accidental, dependent perhaps upon some words of its founder or some phase of thought among his followers. For example, search has been made in the gospels for words or acts of our Lord which affirm this quality of His gospel. Likewise some have tried to account for the wide influence of Buddhism, its claim to be a world religion, from the sympathy, the generous spirit of the great man who first promoted its principles. But such a view of the matter is, at least, inadequate. A religion becomes a missionary religion, it attracts believers of various races, it drives its preachers forth to various climes, because it contains certain doctrines, it deals with certain facts, it aims at certain results in which all men are believed to be deeply concerned. It is a mournful fact that only three religions have arisen in the whole history of man which have reached this high view-point, and which possess, therefore, such qualities as to quicken in their adherents this missionary impulse. These three are Buddhism, Mohammedanism, and Christianity. In the world to-day they alone are deliberately competing for the faith of mankind. Before the advance at least of the



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last two, numerous religions have been swept away. None has proved strong enough to offer a real and prolonged opposition. Hence it is generally recognised that the supreme struggle lies between these three. Each is seeking to whet its weapons against the other, each is planning for a vast campaign, wisely assimilating truth from its opponent, but determined also to identify and expose whatever of falsehood it teaches, whatever of evil life it engenders.

The spread of western civilisation, which has been so deeply moulded by Christianity, is carrying with it one weapon, which is proving itself most powerful, namely, western science. The scientific methods of investigating outward nature and human history which have grown up in Christian lands, and which are in a larger measure than many realise the product of the Christian spirit, are rapidly dissolving the power of the mightiest non-Christian religions. Apart even from the preaching of the gospel, the mind of the heathen world is being awakened by this process which God has been preparing for long centuries in Europe and America. It has begun to throw off the shackles which bound it to dark superstitions, it has begun to grow out of the juvenile stage when it caught glorious glimpses of half-truths and treated them with the unpractical enthusiasm of youth, as the final meanings of life. That mind is being hurried with almost breathless speed to make the awful choice between the Christian faith and a world from which all gods have vanished, from which all prospects have been

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shut out except the night of a hopeless death. Christianity, as “the power of God unto salvation,” as the historical embodiment of God’s redemption of mankind and His final self-revelation, is thus destined to stand before long as the one only religion offered to the heart and to the intelligence of mankind.

### II. THE OLDEST MISSIONARY RELIGION : BUDDHISM

Before we proceed to the study of Christianity as the absolute work of God’s grace, and therefore as the supreme missionary religion, it is right to inquire what elements in those other two religions, namely, Buddhism and Mohammedanism, have given them even for a time the appearance of being absolute or missionary religions. What have the founders and heralds of these religions thought that they could do for mankind which was worthy of such ardent devotion? And first we must take account of Buddhism.

1. *The Founder of Buddhism and his Doctrine.*—This religion arose in Northern India in the sixth century before Christ, from the experience and teaching of Gautama, a prince who at the age of twenty-nine gave up home and family, wealth and power, that he might discover the secret of the blessed life, and spread among his fellow-men the good news which he had discovered. To-day his religion, although it has vanished in its distinctive form from India, yet holds sway over vast multitudes in China, Japan, Ceylon, and Siam. Gautama

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was wearied of the formalities and corruptions of Brahmanism, the prevailing religion. He lost faith in its gods, its ceremonies, its priests, and its practical moral influence. There was just one of its fundamental teachings which he did not get rid of, namely, its doctrine of reincarnation. He continued to believe and to teach that the self of every man has existed in countless earlier forms, and is destined to pass on into yet other conditions of life. The new form which selves assume at each death, or at each passing into a new state of existence, is determined by the kind of life which they have lived in the preceding one. Through noble life a nobler life may be reached, while degraded selves inherit in the new state degraded conditions. Men thus find themselves in a monstrous "wheel" of existence from which there is no ascertainable escape. In an endless succession of lives they have been paying the penalty of blunders and crimes committed in some forgotten age of the past, and they are now preparing themselves for they know not what better or worse incarnation when their brief and bewildered life here shall end. With this as the background of thought, Buddha, the Enlightened One, as he came to be called, worked out his own spiritual experience, and from that drew his message of salvation.

(1) The first fact before him was this, that human and indeed universal experience was full of suffering. All animals are creatures of pain, even as we. (2) But if this eternal source of sorrow, this endless chain of successive births and deaths, with wondering and woe

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between, is the supreme fact, it means that existence itself is the supreme evil. If we know of no path by which we can break through to eternal joy, then the only deliverance that seems rational is that each man should seek to destroy his own existence. That will be Nirvana, the supreme Rest indeed. (3) Vulgar suicide cannot do this. That only hastens a man into the next incarnation by a criminal act. We must learn to strike at and destroy the very root of existence itself. Buddha found that mysterious and baleful root to be the desire for existence, the "will to live." If that desire can be killed, the restless life which springs from it will end. (4) The desire for existence works through or expresses itself in all the particular appetites and passions of our nature. If these could only be attacked and slain in detail, the root from which they spring would perish.

This view of life's problem and its solution was no mere speculative process. It was worked out in the soul of Buddha step by step and at a great price. He tried one way after another which famous teachers pointed out, until the secret was disclosed through their failure to help him and his gradual approach to the only conclusion which seemed possible. *He practised as he thought.* He disciplined himself by separation from all the interests and responsibilities of that high station in life into which he had been born. When he found in his own soul the passions quelled, the very love of life dead, a wonderful light seemed to shine upon his





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soul. He became "Enlightened," at peace, waiting with meditative calm for that final release when death should come and he who loved not life should lose its burden. To be sure of that was to be at rest. And *he practised ere he taught*. But, when he had learned this way of salvation, he could not resist the impulse to call others to enter upon it. He found and trained a band of disciples, whom he required to separate themselves as he had done from the world of human affairs, and to pursue the path which he had opened up. The societies of monks and nuns which he formed were pledged to a life of self-denial, of chastity, of profound and habitual meditation. They were taught and became teachers of his four noble truths, including the "eightfold path" of deliverance. The ideal state which he thus set before his followers was recognised as possible in this life only for a few. But the masses of men who were not strong enough to enter upon its full demands must be called and trained into sympathy with it. They must learn to practise, as far as was compatible with the maintenance of the ordinary relations of life, self-restraint in all appetites, pity for all living things, the pursuit of truth, humility, love, and purity. They would thus do something to ameliorate their next state of existence and make it easier there to obtain the full enlightenment.

According to the traditions preserved by his followers, Buddha had no teaching about God. He had lost faith alike in the doctrine of Brahma and in all the innumerable gods and goddesses of his fellow-countrymen.

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But in the strange revenge of time, rather through the invincible appetite of the human consciousness for the divine, his followers came to regard him as one who was a man indeed, but who embodied and represented the universal ideal, which is also eternal and omnipotent. His high personal qualities became for them a kind of incarnation of the absolute goodness. This faith in him, always vague and mystical, was yet something higher than the minds of men had reached in these Orient lands. Along with his definite instruction and rules of life this conception of his person preserved the feeling of relationship with him from one generation to another, and he became the Fountain of Light, the Lord of Life for multitudes of our fellow-men.

2. *The Secret of its Missionary Power.*—Buddhism seems for a long time to have lost its power to elevate and purify human society. In India its main teachings were long ago absorbed by Hinduism, and it ceased to exist as a distinct cult. In Ceylon, China, and Japan it is widespread but inert, formal, corrupt. Of course, its devotees are many of them roused to fresh zeal and higher aims by the challenge of Christian missions and the influence of Christian truth. But Buddhism has no power, as Christianity has, of self-recovery. Christianity has had its dark ages, its lamentably degraded phases of history. And yet in the Bible, that constant witness to the original facts, and in Christ's gift of the Holy Spirit, it possesses the secret of many a re-birth and the assurance that its divine mission shall without fail be accomplished.

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It is important that we should identify and ponder those fundamental beliefs of this ancient religion which made it a missionary religion and gave it power to console and inspire and in many cases even to ennoble and purify the sons of men. They may be briefly recapitulated as follows: (a) In Buddhism we have presented a view of mankind as a whole in its natural state. It is a dismal view, but it is true. All men are heirs of sorrow, are doomed to suffer and to die. But in this religion we have (b) an attempt, which is founded upon a false theory of the cause of suffering, to discover the way of salvation. In practice this "way" was found to be of only partial application. But at least it was open to "whosoever will." In addition, Buddhism had two other qualities which turned these dogmas into weapons of spiritual warfare, and quickened the missionary passion in many hearts. (c) The secret of salvation was found to lie in the realm of moral character. Buddhism was the first purely ethical religion, although profoundly mistaken in its fundamental view of man's moral nature. In the region of purpose, of motive, the real centre of man's being was found to lie, and he was commanded if he would reach the supreme good to be himself thoroughly good. Formality and ceremony were discovered to be of subordinate value, significant only in so far as they nourished the habits and temper of the soul in its pursuit of sincerity, kindness, and justice. (d) This whole view of the human situation arose from a great soul who was full of pity, of generous impulse, of

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humble and self-sacrificing love towards the vast world which seethed in woe around him. His disciples could only see his meaning as they came to share his spirit. Thus he taught them to become openers of the way of peace to their fellow-men. They were missionaries because one who was full of pity taught them to have compassion for all burdened hearts and darkened lives, and to give to others the secret of deliverance which they had learned.

### III. THE YOUNGEST MISSIONARY RELIGION : MOHAMMEDANISM

1. *Its Founder*.—The founder of this great religion, Mohammed, was born about A.D. 570 at Mecca in South Arabia. He began life amid a strange ferment of political and religious conditions, which pervaded the whole of that region with disorder and unrest. The ancient paganism, with its idols and star worship, had fallen into disrepute. Religious enthusiasts were numerous, whose fervours, asceticism, and wilfulness at once increased disorder and indicated the birth time of a new order. Such persons were supposed to be inspired by one of the *Jinn*, spirit-beings whom the Arabs believed to be in close touch with human life. Among the various movements there arose a class known as “converts,” who believed in the existence and unity of God, in human responsibility and in the judgment to come. Mohammed belonged to this class, and in his earlier manhood was



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sincere, mystical, self-sacrificing, earnest. He became an ardent propagator of the new doctrine, and was soon marked out as its leader in Mecca. Feuds arose partly from clan jealousies, but were fostered into new intensity by his hatred of idolatry and insistence on a purer form of worship. He was driven to flight and took refuge in the neighbouring city of Medina, A.D. 622. This became the first year of the Mohammedan era. With a band of followers numbering already over a hundred families he preached even more aggressively than before. He published from time to time revelations which he avowed that he had received by inspiration of God through the angel Gabriel ; and he claimed from his disciples absolute obedience to all the laws and practices which he thus made known by Divine Authority. Judaism had for long been strongly represented in that region, and Mohammed was familiar, though not at first hand, with the traditional accounts of the Hebrew patriarchs ; he knew a little about the rest of the Old Testament history, and something also of the Jewish code of morals. Christianity had also reached that part of the world towards the end of the sixth century, but evidently in a form which failed to represent its full strength and truth. But Mohammed knew enough of Jesus to count Him the greatest of the prophets that had gone before him.

2. *Its Fundamental Doctrines.*—The religion which Mohammed founded may be said to have five fundamental doctrines. Each of these has contributed to

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the missionary character of the religion and the zeal of those who even to-day in thousands are extending its borders in Africa and the East. (1) It teaches that Allah (God) is one, and Mohammed is his prophet. Thus polytheism and idolatry are swept away at one stroke. (2) The whole world is seen in its complete and unconditioned dependence upon the creative will and the complete, minute, and constant control of the living and personal God. (3) Notwithstanding its insistence that the will of God ordains every event that comes to pass, it violently escapes pessimism by insisting with equal emphasis upon the responsibility of man. (4) There is one law of God for all men which has been at last and finally made known by Mohammed. All men are responsible for their obedience to that divine will, and in a future life will receive the just penalty or reward for their doings in this life. The fundamental law is that they should submit absolutely to Him and His prophet. This submission must be daily expressed and confirmed in the constant recital of the creed and in the profound and humble act of prayer which is required at fixed hours five times a day. (5) All the messages of God through Mohammed and all the requirements which He makes upon man are recorded in the Koran, the book in which the scattered pronouncements of the prophet were gathered a few years after his death. Every true believer is commanded to be master of that book of revelation.

It is not difficult to see that there is much important

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and vital truth in this powerful and widespread religion. Its teachings in many respects resemble, and indeed were derived from, the Jewish religion. Nor is it hard to realise that when it comes to a race of idolaters, when it wins their assent, it must immediately give them nobler conceptions of human nature, more inspiring views of duty and destiny than any which they possessed before. Not only so, but they find themselves roused to missionary enthusiasm in its behalf. Mohammed himself required with the utmost vehemence that his followers should be preachers of the Word. Great rewards were promised to those who should be zealous in spreading the truth, and the greatest of all to those who should die in battle on behalf of their faith, and for its propagation among unbelievers. Of himself he said : " My sole work is preaching from God and His message." He had at one time true insight into the true missionary spirit and method. " Summon them," he said, " to the way of thy Lord with wisdom and with kindly warning ; dispute with them in the kindest manner." " If they accept Islam, they are guided aright ; but if they turn away, then thy duty is only preaching, and God's eye is on His servants." Many such magnificent passages occur in the Koran, and they seem to rest on the consciences of multitudes of Mohammedans who are not engaged in formal missionary work.

3. *The Weakness of Mohammedanism.*—Three main defects in this religion may be named here in closing, to indicate at once the limits of its power and the

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manner in which the Christian gospel surpasses and completes the measure of truth which it undoubtedly does possess. In the *first* place, the character of Mohammed himself broke down, and he dared to claim for his very aberrations the sanction of the will of God. He did this as to his practice of polygamy, and he did it again as to the use of the sword in the spread of the faith. From those two roots have sprung and flourished the evils which most obviously characterise the Mohammedan world. Where it spreads it tends to make a desert, and where it dwells in cities it fails to raise a lofty morality. It strangely combines a democratic spirit—in some respects more democratic than any Christian nation—with submission to an autocratic form of government. The mixed character of its great prophet makes its social ideals mixed. In the *second* place, its appeal to the sword both sprang from and preserves a superficial view of man's relations to God in repentance and faith. And *lastly*, it really leaves mankind where the Jewish law left him, condemned and unsaved. Even Mohammed waited in hope that his sins might be forgiven. He was no Saviour, and his religion offers none. The expectation of bliss which his followers are encouraged to cherish is infinitely different in its basis and its nature from that peace of God, that grace of God, that assurance of pardon, that sense of inner and actual reconciliation and fellowship with God which is the first and supreme boon of the gospel of Jesus Christ.



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What we of the Christian faith have a right to expect is that, as the character, claims, and power of Mohammed are studied in comparison with those of Christ, it will become clear that even Mohammed needed for himself what Christ alone has been able to bestow.

## CHAPTER II

### THE RISE OF THE FINAL RELIGION

WE have seen how two missionary religions, Buddhism and Mohammedanism, arose ; and we have briefly described those characteristic features which have given them their great power over large portions of the human race and for many centuries. We must now turn to our main task, to discover what are those elements in the Christian faith which convince us that it is destined to become the one universal religion of the human race. As we have already seen, we cannot give the reason for the universal quality of a religion, nor explain its missionary power, without describing its nature or characteristic doctrines. Hence we must, in order to appreciate the power of Christianity or estimate its prospect of conquering its rivals and becoming the only positive religion in the world, inquire into its fundamental nature.

#### I. WHAT IS MEANT BY AN ABSOLUTE OR FINAL RELIGION

It is well at the start to clear up one matter which proves itself a difficulty for some inquirers.



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Christianity aims at becoming the universal religion, because it is the absolute and final religion. Some shrink from the use of these words because they seem to claim too much, which is arrogance ; or at any rate to shut down the prospect of any further advance of the race, which is despair.

1. *Absolute*.—About the former word “ absolute ” it is asked how we can apply it to a fact or a complex system of facts which have appeared in time. How can facts or experiences, or truths, or beliefs which are obviously relative, because related in time and even in space to other facts and truths and beliefs, be correctly described as absolute ? Are we not told that the Absolute is that which stands outside of all relations ? It would be, of course, impossible to enter here upon a technical discussion of the metaphysical problems involved in these questions. But an adequate practical answer may be found in the two following considerations : *First*, the gospel is said to be absolute because therein God Himself is revealed in direct action upon the human soul. The day of subordinate mediators is done with. Here in Christ, here in the experience of personal reconciliation with God, it is the Eternal and Absolute God Himself who has entered into direct relations with mankind and with the individual man. *Second*, the gospel addresses itself to that in man which in a very real sense partakes of the absolute ; namely, his conscience. It ignores racial distinctions as such. It has no immediate message to mere intellectual curiosity,

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and no exclusive message for intellectual superiority. It penetrates to the central fact in man as a moral being, his sense of responsibility. It confronts him with duty which is infinite, it wrings from him the confession of a sin which he cannot measure or palliate without deepening it. It reveals to him a mercy which he must and can call only infinite and wholly of God, if it is to become his own. In this direct dealing of the supreme and holy will of God with the supreme element in man's moral nature we have the secret of the absoluteness of Christianity.

2. *Final.*—Then, as to the word “Finality,” we are asked whether this does not involve the doctrine that revelation is closed, that man can make no further progress, that the generations to come can learn nothing more of God than is already known. Do we not know more of God and His ways than Paul did? Did even John with his piercing insight make of none effect all the searchings of the saints that have followed him? And what of the generations to come? Are they to receive no new light from God except what the Apostolic minds received? The answer to these questions is not very difficult, and connects itself with the previous paragraph. *First*, Christianity is the final religion because no higher boon can be conferred on man than that communion with God, in peace and love and service, which it alone of all facts in history has been able to bestow, in a form capable of universal dissemination. *Second*, Christianity is the final religion, because all

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further progress in our knowledge of God and His ways must be based upon and conditioned by the saving power of Jesus Christ. Whatever else God may do for the race, He will not abolish the supreme significance of our Lord. Evolution must henceforth flow from Christ as a fountain-head, not past Him as an incident in time. He is inwardly, permanently related to the whole course of history, to the conscience and the destiny of every man, to the character and growth of all nations. There is much concerning God's method of dealing with the race which only the course of time since Christ has disclosed, and which the Apostles could not possibly foresee. There are truths concerning the relation of God to nature also, which were unknown to them and have become familiar to later generations. There may be some implications of their own words concerning God and Christ, the Church and the Sacraments, faith and salvation, which were not at all present to the minds of the Apostles, and which only the relentless logic of other centuries has drawn out and may yet bring to light. But none of these things in any way diminishes the claim that Christianity is the final religion, and therefore destined to deliver its message to the whole race of man. Its finality lies in this, that henceforth only through Christ and His Spirit does God act upon the conscience of man, and the history of the race must be for ever conditioned by the universal and permanent power of His gospel. The influence of the Christ, indwelling in human history, is an

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essential constituent of the entire future life of humanity.

### II. THE GENERAL MODE OF ITS FOUNDATION

1. *The Three Stages.*—We referred to the historical circumstances amid which the other two missionary religions arose, and we must do the same with Christianity. As it lives and works in the world, and has done for nineteen centuries, it is the result of three stages in the action of God upon the field of human nature. First, we have the preparative revelation in and through Israel and her prophets. Second, we have the coming and the manifestation of Jesus Christ, the central, creative Fact. Third, we have the typical consciousness of communion with God which was created in the apostolic circle by the Person and Work of Christ, thus making the Christian religion an actual experience and giving it a permanent place in human history. These three stages are described in the books of the Bible, which have thus naturally and irresistibly become the indispensable means of preserving for the Church and the world a true knowledge of the very nature of the gospel, of the actual way in which God has worked and will ever work upon the soul of man in all its relations, for salvation in all its kinds. It is obvious that Buddhism, as its founder taught it, having an agnostic or even atheistic method of dealing with human distress, falls infinitely short of the sublime Christian doctrine



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that God, the Eternal and Conscious Will, which sustains and directs the course of nature and of man, has in a definite way revealed His character and His redemptive purpose towards man. And even that form of Buddhism which transformed its founder into an eternal Being, long after his death and without any basis for this in his own consciousness and work, has only as it were hypostatized (or treated as eternally real) that human ideal which rose to view in his teaching and his character. It is obvious that Mohammedanism, on the other hand, does not get, even in its sacred book, the Koran, beyond the first of the three stages of the Christian revelation. Mohammed is a prophet, the authoritative announcer of the divine law, the exhorter of all men to repent and obey that law.

But in Christianity, as constituted through the three stages, we find that the living God has entered, let it be triumphantly said, into new relations with the life of man. He has, as it were, invaded human history, from within or from above, as you like to put it. The phenomena cannot be explained by saying merely that here the human striving for God has reached a higher measure of success than in these other religions. That is only a part, and if anything is here less than anything else, this human endeavour is the lower side of the history. It would be nothing if it were all. The vital and surpassingly glorious fact is, that throughout this prolonged story of successive forms of religious experience God always appears to the individuals, who are at once its



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vessels and vehicles, as a conscious will, a personal Being who has invaded the field of human consciousness, and is dealing with communities and individuals on the open plains of history.

2. *Human Need and Divine Grace.*—Moreover, it is of the utmost importance to recognise the fact that in the long process which culminated in the Christian religion, men have learned on the one hand the fulness and reality of the Divine character and will, and on the other hand the depth and extent of the human need. The two processes are correlative; the one form of knowledge has grown with the other. The human need of God has been variously understood by the religions of the world. To the primitive worshipper it may be summed up in the word “protection.” Aware of the innumerable foes which threaten happiness and human life, men looked at these and measured them in external terms. Long life and prosperity, security from foes who threatened them, victory in war and physical content in times of peace, these were the blessings expected from the gods, the region of the Divine. The brooding Oriental mind penetrated to a deeper need in the great discovery that ultimate reality is to be found in the realm of the spirit. All that appears to and is apprehended through the senses is ephemeral. It is in the inner region of the soul’s life alone that the permanent is to be found. Hence the passionate hunger of the Hindu mystic for union with that One ultimate Being on which all things rest, or that inner

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Principle or Being of which the visible universe is but the changing and uncertain and even deceptive shadow. The reabsorption by Hinduism of the Buddhist's deeper insight into man's need of moral renovation prevented the East from reaching the deepest view of all. That came in the prophetic education of Israel. There it gradually grew clear at least to the noblest souls, that man's inmost and final need is a personal and moral harmony with the character and will of the living God. This discovery does not deny the earlier stages. It carries them with it into the highest realms of the truth. For the living God is the providential will which directs and controls the events of the world, and is also the underlying reality of which all else is the expression, the one undying and changeless fact amid all the flux of the ages. And man does need the protection of that will, does need to reach the sense of union with that ultimate and all-pervasive reality. But at last it has become clear that man needs first of all to be dealt with in respect of his moral relations to that Reality which is a conscious and holy will, by that very Being Himself who is the living and eternal God. That is what prophetism in Israel taught, that is what God did for man in Christ, that is what the Apostolic consciousness realised in the first full rush of the accomplished fact upon human experience.

We must now briefly describe the three stages by which this religious view became established among men and took shape as the absolute and

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final and universal rule of man's relationship with God.

### III. THE FIRST STAGE : PROPHETIC REVELATION

In the first place, we have *the revelation in the religion of Israel*.—It is difficult to summarise this in a few paragraphs, because modern scholarship has made us so sensitive to the various influences which acted upon Hebrew life and thought, and even upon the religious practices of the people, from first to last. Also, we now recognise the divergent standpoints of the various periods of Hebrew history, and of the great teachers whom God sent each with his own flash of revealing truth. We are still further aware that a great deal of most important work was done upon the religious conceptions and hopes of the Jews which is not described in the books of the Old Testament. Jesus undoubtedly grew up among a people whose religious spirit and theological outlook were influenced by many beliefs and national experiences which receive little direct illustration in the received canon of Jewish Scriptures. In spite of these acknowledged and great difficulties, we may select the following set of facts as of vital importance for the purposes of this study.

1. *Monotheism*.—The course of religious life and thought which began with Moses became gradually defined as Monotheism, or the belief in one living God, the Creator of the visible and invisible universe, the

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Supreme Lord of all nations, to whom all men are responsible. Although this idea is nowhere formally defined, or systematically expounded, or philosophically defended, there is no doubt that from the days of Jeremiah it was the prevailing conception of God in Israel. Nowhere else in the pre-Christian world was Monotheism fully and actually achieved. Among the Hebrews this knowledge of God grew through a long process of national instruction and discipline. And yet it did not merely grow as if, sown deep in the original soil of that Semitic nation, there were ideas which could produce this and only this splendid fruitage. It was produced, all Hebrews and all Christians have believed, and our Lord Himself taught,—it was produced by the specific action of God upon the life of that people. In Moses and in all the great prophets of subsequent centuries there was a consciousness of inward and personal contact with Jehovah. This experience was so deep and real, so illuminating and authoritative, that it gave them the right to say to the people, “Thus saith Jehovah,” when they delivered their message. And this vivid experience of the indwelling spirit of Jehovah was, again, so truly not of man but of God Himself, that it became through long centuries, in far separated generations, even through most diverse conditions of national life and character, a continuous process of revelation. It is a long unfolding of the loftiest ideas ever formed in the mind of man, which has at its very heart, as the invisible spring of each new moment of in-



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sight, of each new and vigorous mental achievement, the invincible sense of personal contact with God Himself, and of God's living action upon the heart of the prophet.

There are two facts about God belonging to the deep centre of this stream of revelation which must be here briefly set down.

In the first place, Jehovah, the Lord of all, is known as ineffable and supreme in His holiness and righteousness. He is not removed from the material universe, for He sustains and controls all its mighty and glorious powers. It is no deceptive shadow cast upon His glory. It is the robe of beauty which He wears. It is a majestic array of powers, every one of which is but a quick sensitive servant of His will. Nor is He cut off from human life. The children of men are no less His creatures than the sun and the moon in their splendour. Nay, they too are His servants, wherever they live and whatever false or unreal gods in their pathetic ignorance or bestial sin they may worship. But in His holiness and righteousness Jehovah recognises one fact which is utterly hostile to His nature, His character and His will,—that is human sin. Here prophetism speaks a most terrible message. Nothing further can it say until the bitter fact is fully and humbly recognised by men, that in one only spot has God no place, that is in the heart of the evil-doer. For God is holy and righteous, and His attitude towards the unholy and unrighteous will is and must be one of inexorable and complete hostility.



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In the second place, there was found stirring in the earliest prophetic message a note which grew richer and fuller as the centuries flowed on. For if God is the living source and ruler of all, His eye cannot be fixed only on the past and the present. He is a God in whom men may find something more than a mere task-master for each day. All the future is the region of His thought and action, as well as the ages that have vanished (at least for the children of time) and the present which stretches wide fields before Him. For the first time there arose a religion for which the future is an actual source of joy, the limitless, ever unfolding, never exhausted country of hope. God is a being of purpose. His will foreplans and His heart foresees. The years of our life flow to us like a river from beneath His throne.

Now, if this fact in God were abruptly united with the fact of His holy and righteous character, of His fierce and burning reaction against moral evil seated in the human will, a despair would settle on man's mind more terrible than that which gave birth to the passive pessimism of the Hindu. For it is harder to face a holy will that deliberately and rightly condemns you, than a blind universal fate that merely grinds you. To the latter you present the sullen humiliation of an indignant soul that feels itself superior to its crushing foe. To the former you must bow in a humiliation whose agony is infinite, since both shame and defeat, both the sense of guilt and the



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despair of deliverance play upon one another with terrific and unescapable power in the depth of the soul.

Israel was saved from this supreme misery, though often dragged close to it, by the steady, age-long, prophetic assurance that Jehovah had pledged Himself, had bound Himself in an everlasting covenant, never to forsake His people. The greatest discovery ever made up to that time by the human mind came as a double revelation, through prophet after prophet, that a nation's sin was its mightiest foe, but that God Himself, against whom the sin was directed, would prove mightier still, in a pure and cleansing mercy. Thus arose the vision and worship of One whose very rectitude was the fountain of His pity, whose mercy as well as His righteousness endureth for ever.

2. *The Messianic Hope.*—But if God is the God of the future, and if His faithfulness and His grace have one root in His eternal will, then for Israel a great light shines upon the future. This light is known as the Messianic Hope. It took many forms and was expressed in many images, according to the changing national conditions and problems. Now, it was a prophet greater even than Moses, who should usher in a clearer and loftier revelation of Jehovah. Again, it was a king who should carry the people to an imperial glory in which all classes would find their utmost blessing, and all nations be brought under one beneficent sway (Ps. lxxii.). Yet again, it was the age of a new covenant when the relations of God and man would be thoroughly revised,

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when sin would be forgiven, and iniquity finally removed from human hearts (Jer. xxxi. 31). As the sense of sin deepened, and especially as the dreary experience of the exile both widened the horizon of experience and revealed hitherto unexplored depths in the moral relations between Israel and Jehovah, this hope shone even through the medium of tragedy. Suffering and sorrow were transmuted from mere instruments of Divine wrath into the terrible means of a transcendent redemption (Isa. liii.). The sublime figure of the suffering servant of Jehovah arose before the prophetic vision, henceforth haunting the heart of the people with its baffling and yet fascinating suggestions.

At last the fulfiller of prophecy, the supreme Prophet and King, Priest and Victim, redeemer through His sorrow and revealer through His redemption, gathered into one wondrous Person, and realised in one all-inclusive work, these and other elements of that unique hope which God had given to Israel. No Hebrew or Jew, no prophet or apocalyptic seer, comprehended in his dreams and words more than a portion of the vast truth which is Christ, or of the immeasurable work which He has done for man. No interpreter or scribe ever arose who could see in their final unity and inner harmony all the scattered rays of light which fell from the future through God's messengers upon the eager forward gaze of those who awaited the consolation of Israel. As we look back through Christ upon those words of encouragement and vistas of hope which the

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prophets opened up, we discover the final proof that they were indeed messengers of God, adapted each to the need of the hour, holding the faith of the people firm until the Deliverer came, and preparing their hearts to know Him.

### IV. THE SECOND STAGE : JESUS CHRIST

At last there came out from Nazareth a Man on whose one Person the history of our race has turned like a great door between time and eternity upon its hinge. He came quietly, as all God's greatest blessings have come, —like the secret rise of order out of chaos, like the breaking of each new day from the silent cavern of night, like the stir of happy spring from the fruitless winter-tide. Even his identification by the great forerunner, John the Baptist, took place only before a little group of prepared souls. Yet there was in Him a mighty energy. No weak speaker of smooth and sweet thoughts was He. Sentimental and luscious phrases never fell from His lips. No doubtful and shifting programme was unfolded before His mind as He came forth to found the kingdom of heaven upon earth, to change the inner moral relations of God and man. There was something overwhelming in the force of His speech, in the radiating energy of His spirit. The strong men who became the inner circle of His followers were brought to a humble obedience and a yearning faith towards the majesty of His will and the divine light of His wisdom. The



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gentle dawn was produced by the immeasurable might of the sun.

But Jesus did not appear as men had generally expected the Christ to come. He did not descend from the heavens with awful portents and with physical signs of a catastrophe in history. Nor did He essay to grasp the means of earthly power, and establish at once a Jewish Empire to which all the nations, even Rome, should bring their tribute. It was through perplexity and disappointment, even through dismay, and, for a brief time, through collapse of faith, that Christ led His disciples into the new era. Nor, again, did He give them formal instruction about His Person, and then leave them to attain the new experience of God's grace as a subsequent event. Nor, yet again, did He give them first a new experience of God's Fatherly grace, so wonderful and glorious that in sweet gratitude they turned round and invented for His meek and inappropriate Person the garments of Divinity and the mythology of an incarnation. The great transformation of the relations of God and man was wrought much more simply and naturally and deeply than in any of these ways, and the New Testament so describes it that the humblest minds are much more likely to understand than to misunderstand its essence. The real method of Jesus may be best put in this way. The new religious experience, the consciousness of new relations with God, grew up in the disciples step by step with their gradually deepening appreciation of the Person of their



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Lord. It is as false to say that He first taught them the full truth about His divinity, and at a later date they entered into the new experience, as it is false to say that He led them into the new experience and at a later date they called Him Divine. The inner experience of the grace of God the Father, and the worship of Christ as the Son of God in human form, were from the first hour of discipleship mutually related. The seed of both was sown when the disciples called Him Master, and each nurtured the other until, after the blackness of the Cross and the glory of the Resurrection, they found themselves in possession of their own new sonship and caught into the rapturous worship of the Father and the Son in the Holy Spirit.

1. *His Relationship with God.*—The first element in the situation was the quality of His own relationship with God, which Jesus manifested in all the varied expressions of His personal life. Here was one who not so much aspired after God as possessed Him. Without penitence, without any signs of past sin or broken faith or unattained ideals, He lived in the full and serene consciousness of perfect oneness with the will of God and realisation of His indwelling Presence. His very use of the word “Father” as the supreme human description of God revealed an ideal of faith and devotion pure and purifying, noble and ennobling, which no man can ever feel that he has even adequately grasped, far less attained. But there was an accent in His use of that word in relation to Himself—“My Father,” “the

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Son and the Father"—which showed the ideal in all its grandeur and beauty to be fulfilled in His own heart. The disciples saw Him among them, yet not of them. They felt all the power of His sympathy, but it shone through a sense of His unique distinction. For they could only reach that wondrous new life with God which He opened out to them, through a repentance and a faith which He seemed to be not only commanding but making possible. Yet, as for Him, that life was already His by native right.

2. *His Revelation of the Father.*—The second element was His revelation of God to them. He came as a prophet greater than Moses. The Sermon on the Mount and all the parables of the kingdom fall from Him as one who ushers in a new era in the ethical life of mankind. He does this not as a philosopher founding a new school of speculation about the nature of goodness and the method of defining the virtues. Nor, although His language and the occasions of it are sometimes of temporal and Jewish significance, does he teach as legislator for one people and one age, setting forth the solution of merely local problems in social and political conduct. He does it as one who is at home among the very fountainheads of all human action and all motive, and whose principles of conduct toward God and man are therefore of supreme authority over the conscience of every one who shall ever be born as a child of our race. His work as a teacher or prophet endowed with the Holy Spirit (Luke v.) was above all concerned

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with God. But a curious and indeed most wonderful difference appears at this point between His method and that of the ancient prophets. His revelation of God was found not merely, indeed not so much, in explicit words about God, as in His own manner of life, and in the kind of things which He tried to do among and for the sons of men. His own personality contained and conveyed that supreme truth. When He was condemned by His enemies for showing friendship to publicans and sinners, He answered not as a social worker might, by an appeal to humanitarian principles, but in parables (Luke xv.) which may be summed up in the words, "I am acting like God. In my conduct behold His holy love." He revealed God by actually representing God, the will and character, the purpose and the Spirit of the Father shining in His own Person, the Son of God and Son of Man.

3. *The Messiahship*.—This will appear more clearly when we recall the third element in the situation, namely, His assumption of the work and acceptance of the title of the Messiah. When Simon Peter made the great confession "Thou art the Christ," it is safe to say that Jesus had not hitherto applied that name to Himself. But His entire ministry had made it inevitable that His disciples should so designate Him. The notes of the Messiah had one by one come out in His words and works. His miracles of mercy, His dealing with sinners as one who had authority not merely to call men to repent, but to bestow the pardon of God even in

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individual cases (Mark iii.), His authoritative attitude towards all men, and His insistence upon an absolute obedience and an absolute trust from His disciples, proved that in Him the kingdom of God was not merely heralded, as by a prophet, but established as by the King Himself, King of kings and Lord of lords. He made the kingdom actual in His kingship over His disciples. Then He took away from all other obligations and under His own complete control. They felt it, and did not yet understand it. In their minds there must have been a strange blurring of accepted modes of thought, through which alone they could pass to the new and astounding light. They felt themselves confusing Jesus and God. From Jesus they received pardon, rest, courage, and hope, but there is no sign in the Gospels that they recognised themselves as having peace with God. They could not go away from Jesus and find the Father apart, alone, in some other source and mode of enlightenment than Jesus Himself. The joy and contentment of their souls was in the presence and power of the Person and Spirit of Jesus. Hence when He was taken from them they fell back into despair. Their souls had not yet found God or God's peace, even after living so long with Jesus. Nothing is clearer as a result of the modern study of the gospels than this strange condition in which the Apostles found themselves, morally and religiously, as the result of the kingship of Jesus over them up to and beyond the Crucifixion.



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4. *His Expectation of Death.*—There was a fourth element in the situation. While Jesus awoke in the disciples the conviction, partly by His sheer moral and spiritual power over them and partly by His very words, that the kingdom of God was now founded there, in His relationship to them, He yet taught them to look forward. Something more had still to be done ere the matter could be said to be accomplished. Gradually it appeared that the Messiah intended to die. This incredible event, which was enough to shatter their faith and sweep hope from their hearts, Jesus with great energy and firmness taught them to expect. To the last they hoped against hope, but it was clear that He was determined upon such an event. Yet he would relax none of His claims upon their faith. As one doomed to death, He still maintained His lordship and demanded their trust. For what seemed to them disaster was to Him triumphant achievement. They must still obey Him, trust Him, follow Him as if He were deathless. They must still belong to Him as their Messiah-King. It is true that few sayings of His are preserved which *interpret* His coming death. But we are told that Jesus repeatedly unfolded to them that event as one to which He looked forward. And such unfolding could only mean that it was part, nay, the crowning act of His Messianic work to die for His own. He came “to give His life a ransom for many” (Mark x. 45), and to establish even through the shedding of His blood a new relationship between God and man (Mark xiv. 22–25).



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That was what, of course, no man could understand beforehand. Such an upheaval of the human way of looking at death could not be represented to reason before it had created its own new world of experience. Even with prophetic words like those about the suffering servant of Jehovah before them, it was morally impossible for these men to see how the death of the Messiah could be an act of Divine redemption. But the will and words of Jesus steadily held their minds to the fact that for Him that death was not the close of life, but its beginning; not the destruction of His Messiahship, but its consummation.

5. *The Cross and the Resurrection.*—The fifth element in the situation must be as briefly described as the others, though it contains two transcendent events, the death itself and the resurrection of Jesus. Each of these interprets the other, and the two together revealed at last to the disciples the full glory of the Person with whom they had been so confusedly, and earnestly, and blissfully consorting for more than two years. The resurrection, with its succession of self-revealing acts in which Jesus appeared to His disciples, showed them that the power and might of God had burst asunder the fearful bands of death. He lives! was the cry of their souls. He is the Conqueror of the grave. He reigns of right over a vaster world than they had ever dreamed of. Their future He holds now as completely under control as He had sought to hold their persons and their wills during the earthly ministry. He then had healed their

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diseases, delivered them from the storm, rebuked their sins, demanded their service, evoked by the spell of a power which shone beyond all His deeds and words their complete submission to His authority. For these brief earthly months they had gladly yielded all and received all this. But now, as the conqueror of death, as the Lord of the life to come, what limits can be put to His power or His authority ? The world to come is already His home and seat of power. He is now set forth before their eyes as the very Son of God. And no doubt with awe and hushed breath they confessed that, apart from His Cross and grave, they could never have known Him to be this Messiah, this Lord of man's redemption and man's destiny. Unless He had died they could not have known Him as the Eternal Life. Further, the resurrection throws back light upon the Cross. The disciples are not only taught this by the Risen Christ (Luke xxiv.), but by the mere fact that He is the Risen Christ. And as in the days of His earthly ministry so now, the fact is larger than all the words that can be spoken about it even by Himself. But this much at least stands clear : it is proved that He had a right to say of His life, " No man taketh it from Me, I lay it down of Myself." The Cross was no base and undesired fate, the *via dolorosa* was no unavoidable path along which only alien forces scourged Him. Amid all the active clash of wills which nailed Him to the bitter tree, His own was not a merely passive will. The symbol of the dumb lamb fails us at that point. The disciples recalled, for

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they have reported, the set face with which He went up to Jerusalem, the amazing energy and majesty of His mien as He walked before them ; the dark battle of the spirit into which at times He was swept, when His voice broke and His face showed the intensity of the inner conflict ; the royal authority which clothed Him as He met Hisfoes in the great conflict of those portentous days ; the royal grace of His last evening with the disciples ; the agony in the garden ; the unyielding will through the very last scenes. Looking back from the light of the resurrection, they saw now that through all those weeks and months He had been giving Himself. Such a gift from such a being could only have one meaning, and that the atonement for the sin of the world. The Cross is illumined by the resurrection sheen. Its very blackness is its glory. He who endured it despised the shame for the joy that lay beyond. Into that joy His disciples had now entered.

### V. THE THIRD STAGE : THE CHRISTIAN CONSCIOUS- NESS AND THE WORLD

When the Spirit of God had entered into the hearts of the disciples, they knew that the kingdom had now been actually established. But the very word, kingdom, seemed inadequate, and hence occurs with comparative rarity outside of the gospels. In their minds it was associated with all those mistaken hopes of their people, out of which they had only been brought at great cost

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to their Master and to themselves. What they now had was salvation, eternal life, the assured and realised grace and love of God, the indwelling of Christ, of God, of the Holy Spirit in their very hearts. We can easily see from the Acts of the Apostles how surprised and confused they were at the first, and that only by degrees did they come to see clearly in the new world which they inhabited. This might receive abundant illustration. But we must be content with that which concerns the main subject of our study. The Book of the Acts, in the simplest and frankest manner, describes for us a series of astonishing experiences through which the disciples came to see that their own new relations with God in Christ constituted the universal religion of mankind.

Even the words which they have recorded that the Risen Christ had spoken to them, commanding them to preach the gospel to all men, were not at once clear to them. Like so many of His sayings, this last and glorious one had to break through many prejudices which still encrusted their minds and hearts ere they could intelligently and joyously obey it. It would seem that some of them never thoroughly entered into its spirit. At first they made the temple the centre of their public worship, though they also had other gatherings of their own. It was not one of the original band, but Stephen who first proclaimed boldly that the temple must vanish and Mosaic law lose its authority. It was only when he had sealed his



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witness with his death, and the full force of Jewish hatred smote upon the company of believers, scattering them from Jerusalem, that the gospel began to be proclaimed outside that city and beyond the limits of the Jewish race. Luke tells us of the successive stages of enlightenment. Philip the Evangelist ventured to preach Christ to the Samaritans. The result was such that Peter and John were formally sent by the Apostles who had not left Jerusalem to oversee this unexpected extension of the movement. What they saw compelled their sympathy and co-operation. Philip, an intrepid and eager missionary, had his famous encounter with the man of Ethiopia and baptized him. The next surprise came to Peter himself in connection with his visit to Cornelius, the Roman officer. He actually went beyond all strict Jewish rules, for he not only baptized this man and his friends, but became their guest. The authorities at Jerusalem were alarmed, but when he told them the whole story, "they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then to the Gentiles also hath God granted repentance unto life." The universality of the gospel was beginning to shine before their astonished eyes. But the scales were not all removed yet, and their vision of the glory of God's grace in Christ was still dimmed by fear and prejudice.

At last the whole matter was raised in a decisive manner by the experiences of the Church at Antioch. At first the word was preached even there "only to Jews" (Acts xi. 9), but it was not long before the



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message was delivered to men of Greek extraction (ver. 20). Then Saul of Tarsus appeared on the scene, and the wider mission of the Church was definitely begun. The cautious and even timid leaders at Jerusalem were perplexed indeed, but it is greatly to their credit that always when the facts were put before them, when it was proved that the grace of God, that new and wonderful force in human history, had done for Gentiles what it had done for Jews, they acquiesced. It was not for them to fight against the very Spirit of their Risen Lord. They might try to make conditions which would render this unwonted intimacy of communion between Jews and Gentiles less difficult, but they refused firmly to oppose any obstacle to the full reception of non-Jewish Christians into the fellowship of the Church of Christ (Acts xv.).

The man who most powerfully led the Christians into the new world of freedom was the Apostle Paul. Others, no doubt, saw the matter for themselves with the same clearness, as the Johannine writings and the Epistle to the Hebrews abundantly prove. But Paul had gifts of leadership, energies of speech and action, which made him the most effective personal force in revealing to the Church and the world the absoluteness, the finality of the gospel, and therefore its claim to the obedience of every human being. In his work most fully and broadly, and yet also in the work of all the acknowledged Apostles of Christ, the Christian religion made itself manifest as the great missionary religion.

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Henceforth it could not be true to itself unless it claimed the right and authority to become the one religion of mankind.

It is our duty now to examine more closely into the fundamental doctrines of Christianity, that we may see what that is which renders it for all believers the absolute and final religion, and which therefore commits them all in principle to the spirit and aim and work of the missionaries of Christ.

## CHAPTER III

### THE CHRISTIAN REVELATION OF GOD

CHRISTIANITY fundamentally consists in a revelation of God. This revelation, far from being merely the achievement of eager human souls who have discovered Him passive and remote and impersonal, was made on the plains of human history in words and deeds and persons by the direct and specific action of God. The absoluteness lies here, in the real action of God giving Himself to be known by men in His will and purpose. This He has done through the Incarnation in the Person of Jesus Christ, and through the gift of His very self in the Holy Spirit to each believing soul. The finality of Christianity lies here, in that God so made known is able to do the utmost that man needs for the fulfilment of his true nature, the attainment of eternal life, the possession of the supreme good. It is with such affirmations that this missionary religion arose at first, and confronts the world to-day. If we are reminded that the Christian conception of God is questioned by multitudes in so-called Christian lands, it is sufficient here to reply that nevertheless this very conception, for its intellectual value in explaining the course of nature and the experience of

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man, for its moral beauty and power, still holds the field in solitary grandeur. There is no important consensus of opinion upon any other explanation of our world. The eternal God is still manifesting Himself to the sons of men in redeemed characters, in saintly lives, in the living consciousness of countless Christian men and women.

For the purposes of this study we may compare the doctrine of God which the missionary must carry over the world, with the ideas which obtain among non-Christian races to-day. And here we may well pass over the position of those whose worship is what we call primitive. Some missionaries and other observers maintain that even among the rudest African tribes the idea of a Supreme Being, who is Creator and Lord of all, survives in the midst of more degraded conceptions. However this be, the missionary has generally found that once he has gained the right words, and ascertained their point of view, it is not hard to get these people to understand and to accept the truth about the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. We must compare the Christian position with that of higher races and religions.

### I. COMPARED WITH AGNOSTICISM

In the first place, the doctrine of God is confronted by Agnosticism. Buddhism has taught multitudes to deny that we can know Him who is infinite and eternal. And their position has seemingly been reinforced by certain movements of Western philosophy which try to



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gain a rational ground-work for the teaching that we not only do not, but by the very structure of our minds cannot, know God. In India and Japan large numbers of the educated classes are of this persuasion, which they associate with the names of Darwin and Spencer.

1. *The Truth in Agnosticism.*—Now, we must begin by honestly recognising that not only in the Bible but throughout the history of Christian thought, a certain reverent and relative Agnosticism has been maintained towards the being and nature of God. “God is great, and we know Him not,” has been the humble cry of many hearts that in another sense know Him well. “Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?” was the challenge of Zophar to Job, who so patiently suffered at the hands of God and the mouths of men (Job xi. 7). “How immeasurable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!” was the exclamation of Paul, who yet maintained that God had put Himself within the range of human knowledge. There must be something in the Christian position which makes these two statements compatible with one another. What is it? The secret is to be found in this, that God is not a being who can be merely described in abstract terms by calling Him the Absolute, the Eternal, the Unconditioned, and so on. Those words are really all adjectives used as nouns. If you raise any adjective to the dignity of a noun, it is always apt, unless cautiously handled like a beautiful tame tiger, to have its revenge and slay your power of



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sane and clear thinking. To avoid this fate, we must conceive of God, first of all, as a most living and real being, one who possesses conscious will, the power of determining Himself towards ends worthy of His nature and His character. In that case He must have the power of determining Himself towards the means by which those ends are to be attained. The Christian religion asserts that He has so determined Himself towards men, that He has given Himself to be known, for it is only through our knowledge of Him that His end can be attained. It is true that He still lives out, far out, beyond any horizon of knowledge of which our minds are capable. But He has moved upon us within that horizon, and has revealed Himself in action, in certain definite and concrete ways. It must be enough for us here to state briefly three ways in which God has thus revealed Himself.

2. *The Revelation in Nature.*—When from the Christian standpoint we look back, we can say with great confidence that God has made Himself known in nature. Paul takes for granted that the history of thought in his Greek-Roman world would bear him out in this (Acts xvii.; Rom. i.). Thoughtful men of many types and climes and races have beheld in earth and sky and sea glorious witnesses to an “everlasting power and divinity,” which alone could account for the majesty, beauty, order, and beneficence of their phenomena (Rom. i. 19, 20). This is not merely knowledge about Him. When it is accompanied by sympathetic

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insight and responsive action of heart and conscience, it is real knowledge of God Himself. Paul insists that in a true sense this is "knowing God" (ver. 21), even though the knowledge is misused. This must be expanded to include the revelation of God in human nature. It was through meditation upon the mind of man, in its inner and unfathomable depths, its superiority to the world of things, that the Hindu found his way to the conception of a spiritual universe. Greek philosophy travelled on the same path, but with clearer method and more satisfying results. To it the general conceptions of truth and beauty and goodness were not mere abstract terms, corresponding to no object, but represented realities in a super-physical realm where the soul breathes its native air. The Supreme Good, the Idea which at last in its study of perfection the mind may reach beyond all other ideas, is the origin of all order in nature. That is God. And yet under pre-Christian conditions of life this mode of thought remained as the privilege of the few, these vistas were for the eye of the trained philosopher and gave no hope to the masses of men. For most men human life did not become a revelation of God. The history of man seemed to have no unity, no order, no moral beauty, affording no clue to the Maker of all. Rather did it tend too often to blur and obliterate the clues which outward nature in her might and regular movement yielded to thoughtful and reverent souls.

3. *The Revelation in Christ.*—Christianity is founded

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upon the belief that God made Himself known actually and directly in Jesus Christ His Son. Apart from features of this fact which we must delay for a little, one thing must be emphasised here. Jesus claimed that He knew God, and that His whole work among men flowed from that direct, real, and even superhuman knowledge of His Father. The modern Agnostic is by this fact put into rather an awkward personal situation. He must have the courage to insist that Jesus Christ did not know God. There can be no doubt of the supreme moral elevation of Jesus, nor of His intellectual power, nor of the mighty influence which He has exerted on the lives of men at this exact point. His whole estimate of life, His whole power over men, sprang from this assured possession of direct, intimate, actual knowledge of God which He could communicate to them. The Agnostic must then say that *he* knows for certain that Jesus did not know God, that Jesus must have been mistaken when He claimed such knowledge. And what is the basis for this courageous and hazardous derision of the central fact in the consciousness of Jesus Christ? How do you know that Jesus did not know God? The answer is, "Because Immanuel Kant and Herbert Spencer have proved that human knowledge is only relative, that the Absolute and therefore God cannot be known." This looks like audacity.

4. *Revelation in the Christian Consciousness.*—But Christianity has from the beginning maintained that knowledge of God has become the possession of all who

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have faith in Jesus Christ. That assertion constitutes the very foundation of all its preaching. Without that assertion it has no message, no meaning, no power. Jesus Christ has fulfilled His claim and promise. From Him to all linked with Him by the golden act of faith, the inward assurance of contact with the very will and Spirit of God has been conveyed. True, we must speak humbly and carefully of this knowledge of God. We must not speak as if individually we have been admitted to the innermost secrets of the Divine Nature. And yet we can with great confidence point to the whole course of true Christian experience, to the quiet peace of multitudes whose names are not emblazoned on the list of so-called "Saints," to the new sense of enlightenment which God's spirit gives more wondrously, more widely, more simply than ever oriental discipline gave it to the disciples of esoteric teachers. The number cannot be told of those who have been able to arise and say that in the faith of Jesus Christ they have come to know God.

It is not, then, in mere dependence on the triumph of our philosophical arguments against the abstractionism (if we may call it so), the essential and desolating scepticism of an Agnostic's theory of knowledge, that we may face his kind, whether in Christian or non-Christian lands. We can rest on most solid and unmistakable ground when we base our message on the vast evidence we have that God has made Himself known, and that countless human beings have consciously communed with Him.



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## II. COMPARED WITH PANTHEISM

In the second place, the gospel, in some regions of the world, finds itself face to face with that form of doctrine which is called, in general, pantheism.

1. *Pantheism*.—This mode of thought is specially characteristic of the Hinduism of India. The Hindu philosophy has laid deep and strong grasp upon the conception of the ultimate unity of all things. It regards all life as flowing from one fountain of life. All differences, the infinite variety of facts which compose our world have their basis, their reconciliation, in one eternal, changeless Fact. We cannot name it without destroying it, for all names are symbols drawn from our scattered and shattered fragments of knowledge. We may speak of it as The One, The All, the Life of all life, the Light beyond all lights. The only way to get at this Idea, which comprehends all ideas within itself, is to turn the mind, strongly, constantly, in upon itself. There, in what will at first seem darkness, light will begin to shine. When the body has been humbled, when the appetites have been stilled, when the mind has room to move unhindered by any of earth's passionate appeals, when even the innocent and blessed distractions of the senses have been overcome, when neither sight, nor sound, nor taste withdraws the intent soul from its quest, it will discover its deep, underlying oneness with that universal, all-pervading Fact. That will be joy unspeakable, peace unfathomable, life inscrutable.



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High and fascinating as such a view of the soul's experience may be,—and we must remember that it is proving winsome to many in Europe and America,—it is yet far below the truth which the Christian missionary is able to carry with him. He ought, if he is going to deal much with educated Hindus, to appreciate the fact that Christianity contains whatsoever is valuable in this Hindu version of man's spiritual life, and supplants its defects with what is of surpassing grandeur. The former element comes to light in many a mystical saying in the New Testament, especially in the Apostolic experience of union with God through the Risen Christ, and conscious inhabitation of the Holy Spirit. The latter appears in the Christian emphasis upon the personality of God. In the mind of the Hindu the idea of personality is associated wholly with limitation, littleness, futility. He can think of it only as a disease ; indeed, the root and bitterness of living misery lies exactly there. Hence, of course, to destroy the sense of self, to quench personality in the all-absorbing All, is the only way of deliverance from the pain of personal existence. And truly, if no light has ever streamed from beyond, from the good heart of all things to our hearts, this might be the highest view of man which experience would support. But Christianity, with its doctrine of a personal God, must come, some day, to the waiting Hindu world as the very word of deliverance. Their religion means despair because the All swallows up all in what is for man a vast, voracious, unilluminated night. Christi-

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anity alone can be a religion of boundless, exalted hopes, because it is founded on the living God of redeeming love.

2. *Christ's Conception of the Father.*—The Hebrew religion arose among tribes who conceived of their gods as personal beings. That was the point at which the evolution of the final religion could take its earliest, distinctive beginning. Hence, throughout the Old Testament, Jehovah is always regarded as a personal being. When Monotheism reached its full development in the later prophets, this intensely personal conception of God was saved from its peculiar dangers by the powerful manner in which His lordship over nature was combined with His lordship over the inner life of man. But it was, of course, in Christ and His gospel that the personal being of God, His nature as conscious, directive will, was at once fully revealed and finally secured against serious and permanent misconstruction.

In the first place, Jesus teaches us to think and speak of God as Father. So vital and real is this name, that He employs it even when describing the relations of God to outward nature. It is our Father who clothes the lilies in glory, and feeds the birds of heaven with brooding care. It is our Father who sends rain on the just and the unjust, and numbers the hairs of our heads. No one doubts that in the inner life of Jesus there was what we, perhaps vaguely and unintelligently, call a mystical element. Upon His soul there fell the supernal life, as no other soul had ever been qualified to receive it. In his nights of prayer, in the deep movements of

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His glorious nature—all passion and all wisdom, all energy and all love—in the openness of his imagination to the beauty and meaning of nature, the Divine played upon Him as, for the first time in human history, upon its truly appropriate and most perfectly responsive instrument. But Jesus speaks steadily of this inner Being of His life as the Father. He does not seem to have found the full satisfactions of His own spirit, so far as He revealed them or indicated them to men, in those strangely fascinating terms of an impersonal kind with which the mystics have familiarised us. One need not by any means disparage mysticism, especially as represented by some of its noblest Christian exponents, in order to emphasise the fact that they have endangered Christian faith just in so far as they have excluded from their conception of union with God the idea of communion between person and person. Perhaps the Christian message to the Hindu, with his pantheistic conception of God, can render him no greater service than to deliver him slowly and painfully, but surely and triumphantly, out of his hunger for the half-sensuous excitements of his absorption in the impersonal object of his faith, and to bring him into a realised communion with the Living Intelligence, the Holy and merciful Will of Him who is Lord of All, the God and Father of Jesus Christ.

And let this be added here. There is a real mysticism in personal relations which is entirely overlooked by many devotees of pantheistic mysticism in our days,

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and it is the mysticism of the New Testament, of Christ and His Apostles. We need not bow before impersonal vastness, whether it be called darkness or light, in order to find our souls filled with sweetness and our hearts thrilled with the sense of the Divine. It is not only the vistas of forest scenery, or the grandeur of the ocean, the stars at night, or the dew-drops in summer meadows, that inexpressibly flood our souls with beauty. There are higher experiences than even these, and they are found when friend is unfolded to friend, when pure love, when lofty purposes, when holy thoughts and deeds are spoken from the lips and lives of men. These also have the infinite in them, these also capture us with their compelling beauty and power. Along these paths of personal intercourse with personal beings we can travel out beyond the reach of logic or the measure of man's mind, into joys and even raptures as full and more rich in ascertainable meaning than those awakened by aught that is less than a living and conscious self. This is the mysticism of the New Testament, as we have said. It is derived from the guidance and example, the inspiration of our Lord Jesus Christ. For Him God was Father, and for His soul the loftiest joy, and even the ineffable experience, seems to have come when He was dealing with the Father in His ordaining will and His all-blessed love.

3. *God revealed in a Person.*—The conception of God as personal is, of course, finally sealed for us in the fact of the Incarnation. We must still defer for a few pages



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the direct discussion of that topic. All that needs to be said here is that the Divine Nature, which has partially revealed itself in the order and power, in the life and progressiveness of nature, which is still more clearly revealed in the structure of man as a moral intelligence, has been at last most fully revealed by its astounding and glorious act of assuming the conditions and form of a human being. No man who believes thoroughly that in Jesus Christ God has for ever made our nature one with Himself, can find it possible, or even for a moment think it aught but disaster, to deny the personality of the Creator and Lord of all.

4. *Christian Experience*.—After what has been said, it need only be shortly set down here for clearness' sake that the substance of Christian experience involves from first to last the personality of God. All the terms under which Christ and His Apostles have taught us to approach Him are consistent only with this view. If we repent, it is because His holy will condemns our sin; if we find peace, it is because His will grants us pardon; if we praise Him, it is for His deliberate and overflowing grace; if we are humble before Him, it is not because He is All, but because the universe, all that is not God, depends for its being, its meaning, upon His power and purpose; if we have hope for the future, if we await the wonders and bliss of the life to come—the grave robbed of *us*, heaven opened to *us*!—it is upon the glorious kindness of His heart towards us that we rest that expectation. From first to last we must conceive of

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the eternal God whose will and mind and very self is immanent in all things, the ground of their being and the source of their ordered movement, as yet standing over against us, God our Father, God in Christ, God flowing to us as the indwelling Spirit.

### III. THE ENRICHMENT OF MONOTHEISM

1. *The Mohammedan View of God.*—When we come to Mohammedanism we face a religion which agrees with Christianity in its opposition both to Agnosticism and Pantheism. Its marvellous power is largely due to the vivid and uncompromising manner in which it sets forth the conception of God as the eternal conscious will which created, sustains, and rules all things. It is not fair to accuse Mohammedanism as some do of teaching a mere Deism, as if God were a Being who, having created the world, has left it to work out its principles apart from Him. On the contrary, though He works through mediating personalities and forces, yet He works. Nothing happens which He has not willed, nothing is done by men which He does not know and record in His unerring books. Moreover, Mohammedanism arose in mystic experiences of its great prophet, and through its history has produced many high and rare souls who have entered far into those realms of thought and feeling which are familiar to the mystics of other religions. But Mohammedanism has its dark side. It is at bottom a religion of law and not of grace. Salvation is, indeed,

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promised to those who believe in God as the prophet has finally revealed Him, while all who disbelieve that message are hopelessly doomed to the sufferings of hell. But this salvation is not to be compared with that which is of grace, nor this act of faith to be compared with that which Christ has made possible. For, in the first place, no act of Divine pardon, no grace that wonderfully blots out sin, is offered to men. Even those who believe in God and His prophet are in the great day of judgment faced with full, accurate, and detailed statement of all their deeds, and on that basis their admission to paradise is to be determined. Hence God, though called "the All-Merciful," is not known as the Father and Redeemer, the gracious indwelling Saviour and friend of those who respect and believe in His gospel. He is the austere and exalted Ruler and Judge, the awful administrator of rewards to those whose record deserves them, and of fearful penalties to all who have fallen short of His strict and tremendous demands.

Over against this view of God's spirit and way with men we must set the whole Christian view of God, and especially its doctrines of the Trinity, of the Incarnation, of redemption, and of justification by faith. We must here consider the first of these four. Christian missionaries find that the Mohammedans accept Jesus as a prophet, the highest next to the Founder of their faith, but that they have an intense hatred of the distinctive doctrines named above. Mohammed must have heard some echoes of the faith that Christ is the

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Incarnation of the eternal Son of God, if he was responsible for words like these in the Koran. "They say, 'the Merciful has taken to Himself a Son': ye have brought a monstrous thing! The heavens well-nigh burst asunder thereat, and the earth is riven, and the mountains fall down broken, that they attribute to the Merciful a Son! But it becomes not the Merciful to take to Himself a Son!" "He is God alone! God the Eternal! He begets not and is not begotten! Nor is there like unto Him any one!" It is equally monstrous in the eyes of a Muslim to say that God was incarnate, found in fashion as a man, in Christ Jesus. The heaven of heavens cannot contain Him; how then could He mingle His majesty with the littleness and shame of human nature?

2. *The Worship of Christ.*—As we have already seen, the Christian faith arose at first among Jews, who were trained to loathe any form of worship which seemed to detract from the solitary glory of Jehovah. So far as we know there was not in Judaism the slightest tendency to depart from that principle. But, as we also know, the disciples of Jesus were gradually drawn into a conception of Him as the Christ in virtue of His personal influence over them in the field of their religious consciousness; in virtue of His explicit words and acts as the revealer of God and the Lord of the kingdom of heaven; in virtue of His resurrection, viewed as an act of God which put the Divine seal upon all His claims and upon all the experiences which His personality had



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created ; in virtue of that sacrificial death, illumined now both by His words and acts before the event, by His resurrection and by the new world of Divine love of which it was the dark doorway. The result of all this was that they could not conceive of God except through Christ. Their faith in God, their worship of God, their love of God, their new and happy obedience to His will, was all conditioned by or realised in their faith and worship and love and obedience towards Jesus Christ. This was not a theology, it was no mere syncretism of ideas floating through the air of troublous times from Eastern mystics and Western philosophers. It was first of all an overwhelming experience of the indwelling of God in their very souls, and it was through and through made possible in every throb and fibre of it by the person and work of Jesus Christ. They did not argue themselves into the worship of God in Christ, of Christ in God. They were lifted, surprised, compelled into it by Himself.

3. *The Spirit of God.*—And then another event happened to them, namely, the coming of the Holy Spirit. There was no such thing as a unified and consistent doctrine of the Spirit in Judaism. As of the Messiah, so of the Spirit of God, there were scattered glimmerings, unsystematic notions. Even in the words of Jesus, not excluding the great passages in John xiv.—xvi., there was not enough material to produce of itself the teachings of the Epistles, nor to create a faith which could induce that enthusiastic consciousness from

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whose depths those teachings sprang. Jesus seems to have said just enough to give them the key to the interpretation of the great event when it happened, and of the great new Presence which was then and thenceforth realised within the organism of human experience. Hence it is not too much to say that even if the second chapter of Acts had not been written, careful students of the New Testament would have been almost compelled to invent some such event,—namely, the coming of the Spirit of God to the disciples as a body,—in order adequately to explain the position which the work and character of the Holy Spirit assumed in the life and thought of the Apostles.

The result of all these events, these deeds done upon them by God, was that those strict monotheists found themselves worshipping, trusting, loving, obeying God the Father, and His Son Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit.

4. *The Monotheism of the Apostles.*—It is of the utmost importance to note two facts here.

The first is that this new form of conceiving that Divine Nature towards which their faith and worship were directed did not come from any anticipations or suggestions either in Jewish or Greek thought. They were, as we said above, surprised and yet compelled into it by the personality of Jesus, by those events which occurred to Him or flowed from Him, and by the new relationship with God into which the whole process finally and consciously

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put them. It was as if a company of men should be carried by the spell of a great captain to board his ship, should be taken by him through storm and sunshine and over unwonted seas to a strange and wondrous land. There, under new skies, and amid the novelties of a glorious and fruitful scene, they would be forced to readjust their whole consciousness. Their very language would begin to change its meanings, and their ancient forms of thought to yield before the presence of the new environment. So it was with the apostolic band. They found themselves indeed in a new world, as if they were completely changed men, robbed of many an ancient and familiar object, many a dear custom, and yet forced to make some connection between the old and the new, forced to look upon the former things as leading up by God's will to these, lest their very reason should crack and the sense of their identity vanish in so mighty a cataclysm of human experience. The Apostles were thus brought into that form of worship which, at a later date, came to be called Trinitarian, not by ingenious reasonings of their own, not by putting together vague hints from other religions and philosophers, but by a course of experience which, culminating in the conscious fellowship of God the Father, was produced by the Person of Jesus Christ, and was realised in the powerful inworking of the Spirit.

In the second place, while thus worshipping these three names the Apostles strenuously held to the unity of God. Their monotheism had not perished. It had

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passed into a new and higher form. There was room here for abundant and most earnest thought and controversy within the Church, and there was ground also for deep and natural misunderstanding by those, both Jews and Gentiles, who were without.

There are passages in the New Testament which show the Apostles full of confidence that their worship of the one living and true God in the three names, Father, Son, and Spirit, could be defended at the bar of reason. They were living at the earliest stage of the discussion, and dealing with its first questions, but their affirmations have been used by the Church always as the basis of all further investigation. In the Gospel according to St. John, the idea of the Logos, the Word of God, is used to explain the eternal relation of Christ to God (John i. 1). This "Word" is no mere abstraction, but at least a most real and definite element in the nature and life of God Himself. Through this power God has created the universe and directed the course of human history. All races, "every man that cometh into the world," have therefore a native relationship with and dependence upon this Word of God. "The Word became flesh," the writer goes on to say (ver. 14), and thereafter describes the manner in which the Only-begotten of the Father lived and taught, died and rose again in the midst of a chosen group of witnesses. A similar passage occurs in the Epistle to the Colossians (i. 13-20), where the Apostle, fighting apparently against some subtle influences of Greek mystical philosophy (Gnosticism),



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described the eternal relations of Christ to God. He uses the personal term "Son." It was in and through His Son that all things were created by God. In their vast and immeasurable concourse they are "held together" in Him. And He is their true meaning, for the entire process of creation and redemption of which He has been the guiding force will bring at last "all things" into some final and ineffable harmony and unity in Him. The Epistle to the Hebrews opens with a sublime passage in which the same doctrine is laid down (Heb. i. 1-4). A glorious and infinite personality, and not a mere formula, is the supreme explanation of the universe. Thus did the writers of the New Testament set forth the Deity of Christ, and use the terminology, whether Jewish or Greek, which was naturally at hand and most suitable for the expression of their thought.

No one disputed that the Holy Spirit represented the action of God Himself in the human heart. The only question came to be, in after days, whether we can draw a distinction between the Holy Spirit and God the Father as definitely as between the Father and the Son. But in the days of the Apostles this was not disputed. The words of Jesus, even the few sayings in the Synoptics which name the Spirit, were definite and clear evidence that for His consciousness some distinction did exist.

The Apostles, then, on the authority of Christ's consciousness, interpreted by and interpreting their own experience of union with God, held that the

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names Son and Holy Spirit apply to God's eternal Being and Nature as truly as the name Father, and that all three correspond to and represent to our minds, however dimly, real and eternal elements in His ever glorious and ever blessed Life.

5. *The Modern Situation.*—The Christian doctrine of the Trinity has suffered much in recent days, partly from misapprehension of its true relation to Christ's own life, and partly from a prejudice which set in under the influence of positivist philosophies and of the methods of natural science, against the use of sheer reason for the solution of our supreme problems. As we have now seen, the doctrine of the Trinity was primarily rooted in the facts of the Christian life. Christ originated, and His Spirit moulded and directed it. It may be that for the majority of Christian people that is enough. Let them see in the Saviour the eternal Son of God, and in His Spirit the very Spirit of the eternal God, and they may never need or ask for more. But such people cannot be teachers of Christianity either to philosophic minds in Christian lands, or to educated Hindu and Mohammedan theologians on the mission field. The Christian view of God must measure itself in turn against the full force of all these and any other antagonistic systems, if it is to prevail over all and become the universal faith of mankind. In this work its heralds must not, in a kind of childish fashion, complain of the abstruse and technical nature of the discussion. These are simply the qualities of

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thoroughness in every sphere of thought. The men who would convince the world that the worship of the true God means the worship of God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ, in His Holy Spirit, must be prepared to prove at the bar of reason that this view of the Divine Nature is superior to any other view of the ultimate cause and ground of the universe.

For example, they must face the follower of Herbert Spencer, who even in the last edition of his *First Principles*, and after writing in other works many things that seemed inconsistent with it, yet clung to his early theory that from the three ideas or facts of matter, motion, and force he could derive the whole universe and the loftiest reaches of the history of man. That was his trinity, and it needed no less abstruse and no less technical discussion to set it forth than does the Christian Trinity. It might be shown that Spinoza, the so-called pantheist, rested on a trinity of fundamental ideas in expounding his famous system. Not to mention Hegel himself, it may be sufficient to say that any one of his distinguished disciples of to-day—Mr. Royce, or Dr. Bradley, or Dr. M'Taggart—seems, when discussing his conception of the absolute and its relation to human morality, to be at least as difficult, as remote, as unpractical as any of the great Christian expounders of the Trinity. The only way to see the doctrine of the Trinity aright is to compare it with all other systems which strive to give us an ultimate explanation of God and His universe.

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There are three chief opponents of the Trinitarian view of God. (1) First the Agnostic, which tends always to become the materialistic, view is wrecked on its inability to explain the phenomena of the human mind, including the whole course of man's religious consciousness, from below. The lower can never be made to yield the higher forms of reality by a process of impersonal or undirected evolution. (2) The Pantheistic view in any of its varied and subtle forms is ever convicted of doing deep injustice to man's moral nature. That nature resents evil and condemns sin as steadily as it holds the categories of reason ; and a system which, like Pantheism, casts all moral distinctions into one melting pot, to bring out an Absolute in which they are all equally and indifferently included, cannot be endured by the normal consciousness of the Christian world. (3) The Mohammedan or Unitarian view of God as an eternal, single personality of the type of our own is always in an unstable equilibrium. It tends to fall away towards agnosticism on the one hand or towards pantheism on the other. If it strives to save itself by clinging to the name of God as Father, it has no authority for this but the word of Jesus ; and He had no more authority for it than any other, unless He was more than man. It is really not too much to say that the Christian view of God, as a Being who must be conceived of as triune or threefold in His eternal nature, is still immeasurably more secure and reasonable than any of those which we have named.



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### 6. *The Doctrine of the Trinity in the Light of Reason.*

—There are two principal ways in which in current theology men try to justify this position at the bar of reason. They can only be briefly indicated here.

(1) In the first place, there is the purely metaphysical method, which starts out from the idea of the eternal God as a personal being, that is, as living in the form of a conscious will. This conception is given to us alike by our view of nature as an ordered and purposive system, and therefore the work of a rational being, and by our religious experience. But consciousness always implies an object, and will cannot work unless it has, as it were, material to work with. The human conscious will would be inert and really dead, unless it were from the first in contact with that world upon which it can be employed and from which it receives the stimulus to act. If, then, we are to conceive the divine mind and will as eternally alive and active, it must have an object eternally worthy of itself. But between that object, upon which this conscious will projects itself in a glorious communion, and Itself, there must be a medium of mutual interaction. Each of these three conceptions is inherently necessary to our total conception of the Eternal God as a living and conscious will.

It is a curious and interesting confirmation of this argument that when a philosophical Unitarian like Martineau faced the problem, he saw that, without an eternal object, the divine and eternal subject or self

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could have no conceivable reality or life. Hence he was compelled, in order to have a real, eternal God, to suppose that the universe itself is eternal. He did not seem to see or feel these two deadly objections to this form of solution. (a) The universe so far as we know it is a process in time, in which no object really answering to the full needs of the Divine Nature can be found. Even if it be argued that in man, perhaps idealised as humanity, we find that which answers to the "object" we are in search of, it must be answered that this is an assumption which all the facts seem to contradict. For one thing, man is but a late arrival on the scene, and God is eternal. For another thing, humanity is no more worthy than the individuals who compose the mass, and none of them (except One) has been able to confront the Lord of All with the consciousness that in him the will of God was fulfilled. (b) It is not a wild assertion, it is a truth which can be fully argued out, that whatever form of existence is eternally necessary to the reality of God must constitute a part or element of His nature. The theory that the universe is eternal is equivalent, therefore, to the theory that it is a form or condition of the very being of God, and in that case we are thrown back into pantheism, with all its moral dangers and intellectual inconsistencies. (c) We may add yet a third observation, that the theory of the eternal creation of the universe is philosophically just as difficult to conceive or expound or defend as the theory of the

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eternal generation of the Son, or the eternal forthgoing of the Logos. The latter theory has the double advantage of being free from objections such as (a) and (b) given above, while it is founded purely upon the rock of the historical Person and Work of Christ, the Son of God.

If, then, we are to conceive of God in terms of a living and conscious will, the doctrine of a triune mode of His being is logical and necessary.

(2) In the second place, the doctrine of the Trinity may be deduced from the religious conception of God as the eternal Father. For if we are to speak of an eternal Fatherhood we are forced to ask of what He is the Father. To say that He is the Father of the universe is to correlate terms which are unequal in their content. The existence of the universe may yield the idea of a Creator, but not that richer and fuller idea of a Father. If we again find the correlate of God's Fatherhood in man, we are still dealing with unequal terms, for man is, even at the longest date given by science to his birth, but a child of yesterday when compared with the eternity of the Fatherhood of God. The doctrine of an eternal Son is the only secure basis for the faith in an eternal Father. Men who abandon the doctrine of the Trinity as a relic of dead dogmatics are really burying the Fatherhood of God in the same dismal sepulchre of contempt. For God did not surely *become* a Father, incidentally, at a certain stage in the evolution of our world or of any other world in time and space. Our religious consciousness and needs demand or create

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faith in Him as essentially and absolutely the eternal Father. On that the permanence of our faith and the finality of our hope in His grace and mercy depend. This line of thought means that if God is eternally and by His very nature a Father, then some one existed eternally as His Son. But this Son is in that case a condition or element of the very nature of God. He is the other, the corresponding object on whom eternally the will and intelligence and love of the Father is fixed, without whom neither will nor intelligence nor love could be eternally active. He must then be in His own nature and essence the answering, the all-worthy object of God's Fatherhood, very God of very God. And the medium or mode of connection between the eternal Father and the eternal Son must be that Spirit in which each is related to and, as it were, acts upon the other. Through the Incarnation and the Spirit this mystery of God's nature has been revealed.

It is not possible in this place to extend this exposition. It is enough to say that this doctrine of the Trinity is at the very least as worthy of our admiration as any other attempt to conceive metaphysically and religiously of that one ultimate Fact on which all created facts and temporal processes rest. It has this very great advantage, that it compels us to think of the created universe as no mere logical deduction or inevitable outflow from the Divine Nature. It has an ethical origin. It is the glorious reflection upon the canvas



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of time and space of the rich, the ineffably glorious, inner, and eternal nature and life of the Godhead. It is not the task of the theologian to describe the mode in which God has made the created facts to flow in the channels of time. That is the work of the man of science and the historian. The theologian who has learnt to worship God in terms of the Father and the Son and the Spirit is not only content, but made confident and glad to find that this worship of the Triune can be defended at the bar of reason, and that God thus conceived and thus described, albeit with unworthy and faltering lips, is yet clearly seen to be above all gods.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE CHRISTIAN VIEW OF CHRIST

**T**HE distinctively Christian doctrine of God rests on the belief not only that Jesus Christ was more than man, but that He was the God-man. In Him a certain Being who lived eternally in God, assumed the conditions of an earthly life and entered into the fundamental elements of a human experience.

The distinctively Christian doctrine of salvation rests on the belief that in and through Jesus Christ the personal or moral relations of God and man were changed. This change was wrought not merely by the act of incarnation referred to above, but by the act of sacrifice on the Cross and the act of glory at the Resurrection.

In proceeding to discuss these two great topics it is best to begin by fully and frankly acknowledging their greatness. Christianity can never be fairly expounded as a system, or promulgated as a gospel, if at the start we try to recommend it by reducing the wonder and miraculous nature of its central feature. In fact, there are many minds which believe it more easily when it is presented in the unmitigated majesty

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of its original affirmations. Such minds feel that the very ideas involved in it are too wonderful, too much above the range and spirit of man's best religious thoughts, to have been invented by even the noblest dreamers. Moreover, these ideas of a God who stooped in divine pity to the low levels of human experience, and there endured the shame of death for our salvation, are of such transcendent worth that, if invented, those who invented them must be morally superior to Him of whom they vainly dreamed such glory. But if they were really acts of God, then the Incarnation and the Atonement are miracles of the most extraordinary order, perhaps the only miracles in the fullest sense. In them God has entered into a new relation with His created universe, with the nature and sin of humanity, and that relation is becoming the basis for all further developments of our race. The whole course of man's history must be henceforth directed and moulded by God through that system of personal and moral relations which He has established between Himself and mankind in Jesus Christ, His Person and His work.

In this chapter we must deal with the fact of the Incarnation. Under this head there are three main subjects to be discussed. *First*, what is the origin and basis of this great Christian conception? *Second*, how was it first promulgated, especially in its relation to other central Christian doctrines? *Third*, what efforts have been made to explain it in the history of Christian theology?

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## I. THE ORIGIN AND BASIS OF THE DOCTRINE OF THE INCARNATION

1. *Non-Christian Incarnations.*—Here we must take account of the idea which has often been advanced, that as other religions and philosophies have cherished the notion that their founders or heroes had a supernatural birth or enjoyed a pre-human existence, or both, the Christian view of Christ must be treated as simply one more instance of this superstitious tendency of the human mind. This argument takes two slightly different forms. The first asserts that this tendency has shown itself at different times and places independently, and that therefore we need not seek to prove that the Christian Apostles derived it from any other source than inflamed imaginations working upon their intense admiration for Jesus. The other, which is now being strenuously advocated by followers of what they choose to call “the religious-historical method,” insists that the air which the Apostles breathed, especially when they were driven out from the confines of Judaism, was full of this and kindred conceptions which they rapidly absorbed and reproduced in the highly developed form of the Christian system.

In attempting to meet such a criticism of the Christian faith, many feel, and with full justice, that this strong tendency of the human mind, when working upon the great problems of human character and destiny, to conceive of a union of the Divine Nature and the human



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nature is a powerful witness in favour of the Christian position. Is not this one of the flashes of insight given by that light which lighteth every man who comes into the world? If we are to hold faith in a providential guidance of the whole race of man, of a *praeparatio evangelica*, an inspiration which works in some manner throughout history, it is surely in wonderful consistency with that most Christian faith that we find the human mind in so many races and climes attuned to the grand music which the shepherds heard at Bethlehem, ready for the manifestation of the eternal Son of God when the perfect conditions had been arranged? Man has evidently a tendency to believe in a God who does relate Himself closely with human history, and in the capacity of human nature to receive and exhibit the very nature and self of God.

2. *Two Tests*.—But when we come to close dealing with the inquiry whether this vague human hope has been fulfilled anywhere in history, we must seek out and apply faithfully whatever may seem to us to be real and severe tests, worthy and fit to discriminate between the true and the false. And here, as everywhere else in the field of Christian defence, we must be ready most frankly to apply to our own faith whatsoever standards and tests of truth we bring to bear upon any rival faith. In the matter before us there seem to be at least two vital questions with which we must challenge the sublime claims of Christianity, as well as those of any other religion which has developed a doctrine of incarnation.

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(1) In the first place, we must ask whether the character and work of the man who has founded a religion, and God's work through him upon other souls, requires such a theory to account for His power and therefore for His person. In the case of the founders of Buddhism and Mohammedanism, it seems clear that their influence upon their immediate followers was at the highest possible measure the influence of earnest, powerful, and perhaps inspired personalities. But no element in the work which they did requires us to believe that the basis of their personality was other than that which is common to all men. Their personal excellence, high though it was, could not be called superhuman. On the contrary, we find that they had, though in different forms, the sense of moral demerit or sin. Each bears witness to this in the very form of his religious experience. He who became the Buddha had to break away from self-indulgence at twenty-nine years of age, and passed through a long course of moral self-discipline ere he attained his enlightenment. And that moral vision which he did at last win for himself, high and noble as it was, shows itself blurred and incomplete when compared with the white light of the Spirit of Jesus. As to Mohammed, the Koran itself bears on many of its pages the marks of his moral unworthiness. The work of the Buddha was to point out to others, with great and compelling enthusiasm, the discoveries which his own soul had made at such cost, without any faith in God. The work of Mohammed

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was to persuade his fellow-tribesmen that God had inspired him with a long succession of verbal messages which henceforth were to be the law of their life. Neither the moral experience nor the religious influence of these two men therefore requires us to ascribe to them a nature that is more than human, and *their first disciples did not do so*. A man can get all the best that Buddha or Mohammed has done for any one, while accounting him but a child of the human race.

When we turn to the apostolic writings we find ourselves in another atmosphere entirely. The first disciples of Jesus received from Him a religious experience, that is, a new relationship with God, which, if it was real, none could create for them and in them who was not more than a man. When Saul of Tarsus was converted, he found that the infinite gulf, a moral gulf, which had separated him from God was abolished. It was abolished not by any theory of his own mind, not by any emotional appeals of the Christian preachers, not even by a knowledge of the teaching of Jesus about the Father ; it was abolished by the act, the merciful will of Jesus Himself. The earliest Christian sermon on record asserts that the sending of the Spirit of God upon the assembled disciples was the act of Him whom God had exalted in resurrection glory (Acts ii. 33). Henceforth the supreme moral and spiritual endowments of which these men were conscious possessors, than which none higher or more divine can be named by any man, were immediately traced to the personal influence, the active will of Jesus.



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Nay more, the New Testament writers set forth with great energy the evident truth that one who had saved men by His death on a cross, who had been raised from the dead, not like Lazarus to a revived earthly career, but to the eternal life and the throne of God, must be indeed none other than the Son of God (Acts ii. 36, iii. 14, 15, iv. 10-12; Rom. i. 4; Heb. i. 1-4, xiii. 20, 21; John xx. 30, 31). It seems evident that the kind of influence Jesus exerted on His immediate followers, unless explained away as false in its very nature, could only proceed from one who was, as they believed from the first, more than human.

(2) The second test question which we must use is this : Did any founder of these religions reveal the fact that for His own consciousness He was more than a human being ? It is most significant that no other founder of a religion did this except Jesus Christ. Many have claimed to be inspired as teachers or prophets, as messianic warriors of the earthly sort, as representatives of God's will in mundane government of the people. How many of them had a right to make such claims is not at all the question here. The one thing to note is that all such claims fall infinitely short of those which are involved in the whole active ministry of Jesus as well as in some of His explicit words. There are certain functions which He proceeded to exercise, calmly and naturally, persistently and triumphantly, which show that He felt and knew Himself to be more than a human being. Even at the risk of some repetition from an



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earlier chapter (Chap. II.), we must very briefly restate this matter as follows :—

(a) Jesus consistently manifests the consciousness of His perfect moral harmony with God. He never testifies to any conversion through which He had passed, to any forgiveness of sin which He had experienced, to any change from unbelief to faith, from moral darkness to moral light. Yet this was not due to moral obtuseness, such as may be found in many other claimants to the representation of God's will and the solution of our supreme problems. His words and His Spirit have illuminated the awful holiness of God and the sinfulness of sin as nothing else in all the history of the human conscience has done. And it was He who spoke and acted as the sinless One, the One upon whom men might look and behold in His character, His moral self, the very character of God. This alone, this consciousness of perfect harmony with God, sets Him in a unique place in the history of man, and demands that some explanation be found for Him, as a moral fact, which is unneeded in the case of any other man that ever lived.

(b) Jesus, in announcing the advent of the kingdom of God, assumed, as if it were His right and His inevitable and obvious duty to do so, the place of the King. The work of a king is both to announce and to enforce the laws of his realm. Through this work the society is organised in which his subjects are to find the meaning, the reality, and the joy of their entire life. And Jesus

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never speaks as if His society were that of a moment in the history of Judaism or mankind. He addresses Himself to man as man, to human kind in all the forms and ranges of its life. He exercises over His disciples that rule which in principle can only be exercised by the supreme God over the whole race. This must for His consciousness include the future world as well as this, and not only all races, but all generations. Whatever limits were or were not before His earthly consciousness as He looked into the future, the principles of a universal, complete, and eternal Kingship were in His mind and will when He exercised His characteristic and unique power and authority, claimed his royal rights and revealed His purposes as the Lord of that band of disciples.

(c) The consciousness of His Kingship was involved in or bound up with His consciousness of the power to reveal God. This revelation, as we saw above, was not made in formal descriptions, though He uttered what were till that time the greatest words about God which had fallen upon human hearts. This revelation was contained in His personal life. It was conveyed to them to whom the Son willed to reveal the Father. He knew Himself to stand in full possession of the knowledge of the Father, and He knew Himself to stand in full authority over the destiny of men. In that most solemn and even dreadful position He cherished and disclosed the intention to convey, in the only possible way, namely through His own deeds, the actual

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living communion of men with God the Father. The history of the Christian consciousness, at its best, is proof that this work has been accomplished from the first even until this hour indubitably and abundantly.

(*d*) Jesus was conscious that this work of establishing new relations between God and man could not be done either by the words of a prophet or the deeds of an earthly king. To get within the relations of God and man, to make men partakers of His moral standing before God, He must enter as completely as possible into their full experience yet without sin. This meant that He must die. Over, at any rate the latter part of, His ministry there rests the shadow of the Cross. That for His mind and will is not His merely human fate. It is the climax of His work of love. Always moving among men as one who had "come" into their conditions, always speaking, working, reproving, exhorting as one whose utmost love was like the patience of a God, He yet knew that these burdens were light compared with that which was looming before him. Strange and recurrent agonies of soul, precursors of the crucifixion, marked the closing months of intercourse with His disciples. At last He consented to be offered up, because only in dying could He finally pass within the moral relations of God and man, to change them for ever both for God and for man. This element of His consciousness has also entered into the very substance of the Christian consciousness from that

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day until this, and must control our estimate of His Person.

(e) Jesus, even while He lived amid the limitations of a human experience, was conscious that He must, at the last day, as it were stand over against the human race, the representative of man before God, and the judge of man on behalf of God. At that day He would confess or deny individual men before His Father in heaven. At that day He would exercise over all the nations of the earth the authority of one whose knowledge of them is perfect, and whose decision as to their final moral value is itself final.

(f) Jesus used two titles which seem to express the fulness of this consciousness that He stood in relations to God and man which are divine, and which therefore control the whole history of man's moral relations with God. No criticism has been able to tear from the gospel records the fact that He used the word "Son" to reveal, if not to describe, this consciousness. He is *the* Son in relation to God the Father, and He is Son in relation to our race, Son of God and Son of Man. He does not expand or expound these titles. They are evidently dear to His soul. They utter His deepest sense of reality, as to His relations with God and man. From them as from the double eyes of a spring, high on the mountains, the waters of His wondrous consciousness pour forth suddenly in one full, pure river of eternal life. When He would assert His power to reveal God to men, He bases it on this, that He is the Son of God.



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When He would assert His purpose to save men, to give His life a ransom for many, or His authority to forgive sins on the earth as well as to judge men from the throne of God, He bases it all on this, that He is the Son of Man. The parallelism of the titles was deliberately established by Himself, and its meaning must be that He was conscious of a relationship with the race as a whole and with God, which no other member of the race could conceive of himself as sustaining.

It is evident, then, from this brief sketch that the super-human place assigned to Jesus Christ from the beginning by His first disciples was not first invented by them out of gratitude and admiration for qualities in Jesus which were merely human excellences. Their conception of His functions in the reconciliation of man with God was derived from the manifestation of his own consciousness in word and deed, and was the direct fruit of His power to lead them into living communion with the living and eternal God Himself.

The only way to disprove the superhuman quality of the Person of Christ must consist in destroying the application of our two fundamental tests to Him. This can be done only if it is made certain that the apostolic experience of union with God was unreal and untrue, or that it could be derived from some other sources than their faith in Christ and His consciousness of power to create it. But this has never yet been successfully proved in the whole history of antagonism to the Christian religion.

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### II. THE PLACE OF THE INCARNATION IN APOSTOLIC LIFE AND DOCTRINE

We must now discuss a matter already briefly referred to more than once, namely, the manner in which the doctrine of the Incarnation was promulgated by the Apostles, especially in its relation to other central Christian doctrines.

1. *Jesus as Christ and Lord*.—Naturally the Apostles began their work by announcing that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah for whose coming Israel had waited long with aching heart. They believed that this ancient hope had been given and nurtured by God through the prophets, and that He had been directing the history of their race towards its consummation. Jesus had put His seal upon that belief (Luke iv. 16-21 ; Mark xiv. 61, 62), and had accepted the confession of the faith that in Himself this God-given hope of the Messiah was fulfilled (Matt. xvi. 13-20). The supreme, public proof of His Messiahship was to be found, of course, in the Resurrection and in the gift of His Spirit to the community of believers, with the miracles which accompanied and followed that gift (Acts ii.-iv.). But the Messiahship of Jesus was found to coalesce with another fact, namely, His supreme lordship over human life. To Him belonged all power and authority in heaven and on earth (Matt. xxviii. 18 ; Phil. ii. 10, 11 ; Rom. x. 13). Only those were admitted to be true followers of Jesus, and to be giving evidence of their entrance into right

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relations with God, who confessed with heart and mouth and obedient life that Jesus was the absolute Lord of their souls (1 Cor. xii. 3 ; Rom. x. 9, 13 ; John xx. 31).

An examination of a few typical passages would prove beyond all cavil that when those apostolic preachers referred to the relations of God and man, Christ as Lord was always set on the farther side of the gulf which separates the divine from the human. Thus in Romans viii. 1-18 we have a paragraph in which the new life of man in God is very wonderfully described. Here Jesus is never referred to as one of those human beings in whom this life has been realised. He is named always along with God, and the Spirit of God, as source of it. Again, in the opening paragraphs of the Epistle to the Galatians (i. 1-12) we find the Apostle Paul describing the origin of the gospel which he had experienced or received, and which he proclaimed. He insists repeatedly that this gospel did not rise out of human nature ("after man," i. 11), nor was it originated by "a man," nor was it communicated to him through "a man" (i. 1, 11). On the contrary, it came from God through Jesus Christ, and came to Paul when God revealed Jesus Christ in and to his own soul (i. 12, 15, 16). This principle is not peculiar to Paul, but underlies all the writings in the New Testament. Thus in 1 Peter we find that glory and dominion are ascribed in a tone of worship and adoration to Jesus Christ for ever and ever (iv. 11, v. 11), and Christ as Redeemer and Lord stands over against all those who believe in His name (i. 3, 7,

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13, 19, iv. 13, 14, v. 10 ; James ii. 1, cf. Ps. xxiv. 8, xxix. 2, and cf. James v. 11 with v. 14, 15).

2. *The Eternal Basis of Lordship*.—It would seem evident that no human being, however exalted his nature or full his inspiration, could be *made* Lord of all. That relation to the world must rest on his intrinsic qualities as superhuman and divine. Hence the Apostles taught what is called the “pre-existence” of Christ. This means that before His appearance among men in the form of Jesus He existed eternally in God. This conception of our Lord is set forth with great freedom as well as great power by various New Testament writers, especially when they find themselves interpreting the Christian faith to those who knew something of, and were intellectually influenced by, the philosophic thought of that generation.

(1) *Son of God*.—The basis from which all New Testament doctrine about the pre-existence of Christ starts is the term Son of God (Rom. i. 4, viii. 3 ; Col. i. 13 ; Heb. i. 1-4 ; John i. 18). The Synoptic Gospels show that, when Jesus began to teach, this title was used with no very definite meaning, as a kind of honorific appellation of the expected Messiah. But Jesus adopted it for Himself as the basis of His work of divine revelation (Matt. xi. 25 ff.), even while avoiding or discouraging the politically dangerous and less adequate title of Messiah. The latter was capable of serious misunderstanding if it were thrust into the foreground of His claims ; while the former, from its previous vagueness,



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could easily be filled with whatever meaning He chose to give it, by His tone and manner of employing it. In the passages just referred to Jesus distinctly used this term "Son" in comparison with the term "Father" in a way which till that time was without example. The mutual knowledge of Father and Son is set far above the knowledge which can be communicated to men. In fact, the knowledge which any man received of "the Father" is exclusively a gift from "the Son." In the Fourth Gospel we have two interesting passages which emphasise the fact that it was the tone and manner in which Jesus used these terms which roused the passion of the Jewish theologians as against a blasphemer (John v. 16-18, x. 27-39). And, indeed, the latter passage would indicate that He was more anxious to be explicit about the Sonship than about the Messiahship.

(2) *Epistle to the Hebrews*.—When, therefore, the Apostles set forth the Son of God as an Eternal Being, they do not appear to be merely arguing of their own accord from His divinity to His pre-existence, but to be reflecting His own consciousness as expressed in His own words. They may even be said to argue from His divine pre-existence to His saving power. Yet each writer illustrates the matter in his own way, and according to the needs of those whom he addressed. Thus the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, while he shows (in i. 1-4) his acquaintance with Alexandrine modes of thought, yet bases his argument for the deity

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of Christ upon interpretations of the Old Testament which his Jewish brethren would appreciate. Those interpretations did not create the doctrine in his mind, but they supported it through his belief in the inspiration of the Scriptures (i. 5, 7, 8, etc.). The fundamental argument of his letter is based upon the belief that the Son of God chose to be made one with his human brethren for their salvation. That work of salvation indeed depends for its whole efficiency and glory upon the fact that it was wrought by one whose very nature was that of "a Son" towards God.

(3) *Pauline Teaching*.—In the writings of the Apostle Paul there are two main classes of passages bearing on the pre-existence of Christ,—those in which it is referred to as a matter of course, an idea understood and agreed upon among Christian believers, and those in which it is deliberately set forth as matter whose significance is in dispute. To the former class belong such verses as Rom. viii. 3, ix. 5 (?); Gal. iv. 4; 2 Cor. viii. 9, etc. But the most important of these is in Phil. ii. 5–11. To the second class belongs perhaps only one, the famous passage in Col. i. 13–19, many of whose phrases recur in the Epistle to the Ephesians. Here the Apostle is evidently dealing with a situation in which the Christians in certain cities of Asia Minor were involved. They were confused by certain teachers of gnostic philosophy, who seemed ready to give a place of high dignity to Christ among other beings or principles or emanations of the Divine Nature, "principalities, powers, thrones, dominions," and what not.

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The Apostle meets the emergency by showing that the fundamental problems of philosophy are met by faith in Christ. Those problems concern the origin and method of creation, the basis and unity, the meaning and end of the universe, and they are answered in Christ. But it is of first importance for our present purpose to notice that, while Paul's language here deals with a Greek situation in terms which a Greek philosopher would understand, he does not adapt or change or even add new and foreign elements to his previous doctrine of Christ in order to win the assent of Gentile philosophers. The basis of the whole exposition is found in the original view of Christ as the Son of God. He is here said to be the "Son of His love" (ver. 13), a phrase chosen to emphasise at once the eternal, personal, and ethical nature of His being.

(4) *Johannine Teaching*.—Almost exactly the same thing must be said of the method of John's writings. Even though it be admitted that the author has been influenced directly by the speculations of Philo, the Jew of Alexandria who tried to unfold the consistency of the divine revelation in the Old Testament with the principles of Platonic philosophy, it does not follow that the Johannine doctrine of the Logos, or Word of God, is born of Gentile influences. In the great prologue (John i. 1-18) the author of the Fourth Gospel does more than merely adopt a current notion. He develops it in a most original and powerful manner (see any good Commentary on the Gospel according to John, or a work on New Testament

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Theology like that of Dr. Geo. B. Stevens). But it would be a great mistake to assert that the doctrine of Christ in this Gospel was developed through even the author's own speculations upon the nature of the Logos. There is nothing in his statements about the Logos which is not to be found in his statements about the Son of God. Through that prologue he, as it were, makes connection with the world of thought around him, just as Paul does in that first chapter of Colossians. The fact that Jesus was the Christ rested upon the primary fact that He was the Son of God. As the Son of God he was the "only-begotten Son," He was in the bosom of the Father (i. 18), He existed "before Abraham was born" (viii. 58), He came forth from God (xiii. 3), He shared the glory of the Father and His love "before the world was" (xvii. 5, 24). It is a matter of great encouragement for all those who to-day must take the Christian message into the atmosphere of non-Christian religions and philosophies, whether in the East or the West, to find this method deeply embedded in the New Testament. It does not mean that the Christian revelation is to be twisted or adapted to other modes of thought, but that it is itself the touchstone of truth, Using it with great confidence, sympathy, and breadth of mind, a man will discover the truth in other systems, release it from error and limitation, develop its often unsuspected meanings, and make it the means by which the absolute religion lays hold of hearts and minds so far prepared for it.



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3. *The Birth of Jesus*.—That event in which the Son of God became man, the sublime miracle of the Incarnation, is described with characteristic variations by the New Testament writers. As of the death so of His coming, it is at one time said to be an act of God and again an act of the Son Himself. The Apostle Paul says that God sent Him (Rom. viii. 3; Gal. iv. 4), but he also says that Christ made Himself “poor” (2 Cor. viii. 9), that He “emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men” (Phil. ii. 7).<sup>1</sup> The same double assertion is made in the Epistle to the Hebrews (C. i. 6, 14–17) and in the Fourth Gospel (John i. 11, iii. 16, etc.). The stories of the birth of Jesus in Matthew and Luke deal with the mode by which the Divine Person was constituted in the midst of the human family from another point of view. We cannot here discuss the critical questions which gather around these narratives. Two things only fall to be said :

(a) It is very remarkable that while the other writings of the New Testament make no direct statement about this matter, yet in their many and varied references to the Incarnation they make no assertion which is inconsistent with the view that lies behind the accounts in Matthew and Luke. The Apostle Paul, in his letter to the Galatians (iv. 4), speaks of Christ as sent

<sup>1</sup> I have taken here and elsewhere the ordinary interpretation of these two passages (Phil. ii. 6 ff. and 2 Cor. viii. 9), making the Subject refer to the pre-existent Christ. Even if their subject be the historical Christ, His deity is none the less implied, though the pre-existence be not explicitly asserted.

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forth of God and as born of a woman, when it would have been easy and natural to say that He was born of Jewish parents and therefore born under the law—the latter being the chief point he wished to bring out. In the Fourth Gospel, which was written long after the other Gospels, and in the light of their description of Christ, the same freedom from contradiction must be noticed.

(b) With all their important differences the two stories of the birth of Jesus coincide in the assertion that His birth was the result of the action of the Spirit of God in the womb of Mary. That Holy Spirit, the name for the energy of God, awoke directly the process by which a new man was developed, and in doing so brought the Divine Nature into fundamental and organic union with the new personality. Because this Divine Self had thus acted upon, and so entered into, the conditions of the formation of a human being, it was natural and indeed inevitable that it should experience the various physiological and psychological stages of human growth. From the beginning He was the Holy One in new and unique relation with God. Even those who reject it merely because it is a miracle must confess that the idea of the Person of Jesus Christ which these stories suggest is most wonderfully and completely consonant with that which is implied in all the other apostolic references to the Incarnation, and with that developed consciousness of the Man Jesus which we have already described.

Put in brief, we may say that the New Testament sets forth a most natural and, in one sense, obvious

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view of the Person of Christ, though it does raise innumerable problems of the utmost gravity for theological investigation. That view is that the Son of God who lived eternally in God is the same Person who appeared as and who was Jesus of Nazareth. In the minds of the Apostles, Jesus Christ was not conceived of as two personalities, but as one, and that the personality of the Son of God. The human nature of Jesus was for them simply a phase or form of the personal life and action of a Divine Being. What seemed to them so obvious has not been regarded as incredible or unnatural or irrational by the vast majority of Christian believers since their day.

4. *Incarnation and Salvation.*—The whole New Testament view of the salvation of man is based upon this doctrine of the Person of Christ. There is not a distinctive element in it which does not utterly disappear if the Deity of Christ is denied. His perfect sympathy with man, even His capacity for that sympathy, is not obscured, as opponents of this faith allege, by the faith in His God-manhood. Nay rather, the Incarnation is the signal and supreme proof of a sympathy whose perfection of beauty and power and tenderness can never be paralleled by any other act of God or rivalled in the conduct of man to man (John i. 16, 17; 1 John ii. 1; 2 Cor. viii. 9; Heb. ii. 17, 18, iv. 14–16). The mind of Christ in its pure love, in its self-denial, in its prolonged persistence in sacrifice, is to be measured by the same unearthly standard. He gave up more



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than one can understand when He laid aside the "form of God" and assumed the "fashion of a man," going down through stage after stage of deprivation until He hung dead upon the bitter tree (Phil. ii. 5-11). The full ethical quality of the work of Christ is derived, as all ethical quality must be, from the quality of His Person, from the whole sum of relations in which He consciously acted.

It is a shallow though a common assumption of the opponents of this faith, that the appeal of the character and experience, the holiness and sacrifice of Jesus, would be enhanced if He were shorn of His divinity. The supreme force of the gospel, its primary appeal to the human heart and conscience, is to be found in this very fact that in Him the Son of the Eternal God had appeared among men for their salvation, that He might bring them to the peace and pardon of God. The whole moral value of the story of Christ rests upon the background of that journey from the Throne to the Cross. It does not consist in this, that from Nazareth to Calvary one more noble pilgrim soul went, through the well-known road of prophetic service and ethical enthusiasm, to rejection and contumely and an unjust execution. It consists in this, that one who was removed far above our earthly nature and sin and sorrow identified Himself with us, entered into our struggle, bore our shame, and did it all because He felt for us, loved us, and saw that only in this way could He become our deliverer. Take Christ's difference



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from us out of Christianity and His identity with us loses all its glorious power.

5. *The Love of God*.—Not only so, the Incarnation as the path to the Cross, or the Cross which the Incarnation made possible, is the supreme assurance to men of the love of Almighty God. The great affirmation that “God is love” was not due to a flash of insight into the ultimate nature of things by the unaided or even the inspired mind of an Oriental mystic. It was derived directly from the conviction, based on historic facts, that God had sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins (see context of 1 John iv. 8; cf. Rom. v. 5–8, viii. 31–38). Moreover, the history of thought has proved abundantly that outside of this foundation, except among sentimental and fluctuating circles which revel in Christian feeling divorced from Christian doctrine, the conscience and reason of man can find no permanent and impregnable ground for belief in the cleansing mercy, the measureless pity of God. “God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son” (John iii. 16); God “spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all” (Rom. viii. 32),—such words take us to the heart of all things. Other roads may be tried, but they are circuitous, hazardous, and lead through darkness amid many contrary voices. But to those who believe in the abundant proof of the Deity of Christ the way is clear and open, the journey is swift to the throne of the eternal Fatherhood, the home of the love which passeth knowledge and perfects human joy.

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6. *Incarnation and the Finality of the Gospel.*—Lastly, let it be said that the absoluteness and finality of the Christian religion must rest on this as one of its great foundation-stones. Even God can do no more for men than thus to become Himself a subject of human conditions and human experience. If He has done this, then belief in it is the final religion. This one fact, and faith in it, must spread over the world till before its glory all other dreams of gods and salvations and worships and paths of peace fade, as all dreams do when sunlight has lifted our eyelids. This fact of the Incarnation concerns all men infinitely more even than food and drink. It must be the will of God that it should be known to all.

### III. EXPLANATIONS OF THE PERSON OF CHRIST

We must very briefly glance at the manner in which Christian thought has attempted to interpret the fact of the Divine-human Person of Christ. The work of the early Church upon this subject was prolonged and most thorough. In its course every possible logical solution of the problem was attempted, and each attempt was tried in the light not only of the words of Scripture, but of the fundamental nature of the Christian salvation. Any view of the Person of Christ was rejected which seemed to impair the reality either of His divine or His human nature, and that because it would endanger faith in the actual and immediate self-revelation of

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God, or in the completeness and power of the work of redemption. If He was not God, then God is still unknown ; if He was not man, then human nature has not yet been perfected even in one instance, and human sin has not been done to death by that one on behalf of all.

(1) It seems natural that at first there should have been an attempt to view the divine in Christ as a temporary union, accomplished at His baptism by a kind of inspiration, perhaps withdrawn at the Cross, to relieve the Holy One from the shame of death, resumed and completed at the Resurrection. But such a theory was too shallow to go far, and was soon left behind. It is curious to find it revived and modified to-day in the interests of a section of theosophy which is trying in vain to call itself Christian.

(2) It was inevitable, again, that some should arise to maintain that two individualities, that of the Son of God and that of the Son of Man, were united not substantially or, so to speak, physically, but by an ethical bond. The will of God so prepared the nature of Jesus that what the Son of God willed He willed, what He did or thought or said was the word or act of the Son of God, who was thus inwardly and in an unbreakable sympathy bound up with His personal life. But this view was also seen to be too vague. It gave us two personalities linked by an unusual and precarious *nexus*, two lives and not one, even though they were intimately associated. What the Apostles describe, and what the Gospels set forth, concerning the con-

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sciousness and experience of Jesus as the Son of God, cannot be made to resemble this uncertain picture.

(3) It was natural, again, that in revolt from this theory, and in order to obtain a real union of the divine and human, one or the other side should be subtracted from. Though the Arians do not seem to have promulgated a definite doctrine of the Incarnation, yet their theory that the Son of God was not eternal and therefore divine in the full sense, but the first and greatest Creature of God, may have seemed to many to make His coming in the flesh more easy of explanation. On the other hand, very important and suggestive work was done by those (like Apollinaris) who taught that in the Person of Christ a certain element (namely, the human spirit) was absent, and its place was taken by the corresponding nature of the Logos. Here we go much deeper and come into the presence of an organic and vital union of the human and the divine. But put in this form it seemed still to impair the completeness of the human nature of Christ, and therefore to render His redemption of that nature also incomplete.

(4) The logic of the early Church culminated in what is known as the Decree of Chalcedon (A.D. 451). In this important statement it was insisted upon that in Jesus Christ two natures were present, the divine and the human; each was real and each was complete. The union of these two natures was not temporary, nor merely ethical, but for ever indissoluble. Neither nature suffered any loss in order to be capable of union



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with the other, and the two were not merely mixed or mingled with one another, but each preserved its distinct characteristics. In what then were the two natures made one? The answer is, in "one Person or Substance," and that the Person or Substance of the Son of God.

It must be freely admitted that this decree, although it forms the high-water mark of thought in the ancient Church on this great subject, does not give a real and complete solution of the problem. Its value has been mainly twofold,—*first*, in that it condemned the inadequate theories which threatened the integrity and reality of the Incarnation; and, *second*, in that it fixed attention upon the thought that the Person of Christ is the very self of the eternal Son of God, that the mystery of the Personality of Jesus is a new form of the indwelling of God in human nature. The idea which lies behind it, that you can distinguish between a substance and its qualities or between a person and the "nature" through which he realises himself and in which he lives, may be due to a crude psychology or a faulty metaphysic. But even in modern times there is no general consent on these matters.

For long centuries, and apart from a few minor controversies on this subject, the Church was content to abide by the decision reached at Chalcedon. The fathers of the Reformation in general accepted it. During last century the attention of scholars has been mainly given to the work of critically investigating the literature of the New Testament, and endeavouring to reconstruct the origins of Christianity with great

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thoroughness and fulness of detail. The result has been to delay the attempt to give a full and thorough restatement of this doctrine of the Person of Christ until comparatively recent days. For an account of the modern theories of Christ, such as the kenotic theories, which try to describe the Incarnation as a process of "Self-emptying" (Phil. ii. 5-11), in which the Son of God laid aside His divine attributes in order to assume the status of a human being; or the Ritschlian, which insist that we must be content to treat Christ as having for us the practical value of God without speculating either about His eternal nature or the mode of His appearing as man; or the easier and shallower notion that in all men there is a divine indwelling, and in Jesus the Divine dwelt in the highest degree of which man's nature is capable,—recourse must be had to other works.

It is sufficient even if we have shown here that the solution of the Christological problem, though advanced much beyond the earliest and crudest attempts, is far from being yet attained. Just because the fact is so real, so great, so full of meaning and power for the whole development of our race, it not only wins our faith but challenges our reason to fresh study of the manner of it. He stands to-day before the faith of the Church as the God-man who came forth from God's great love in God's great wisdom, that in His own will and mind, in His own love and sorrow, the mystery of the Divine mercy might be disclosed to the heart and conscience of the whole race of mankind.

## CHAPTER V

### THE CHRISTIAN VIEW OF SIN AND EVIL

ONE of the most famous books in Christian theology is entitled *Cur Deus Homo* ("Why God became man"). Its author, St. Anselm, argued that a fact so transcending all other events in history, as the Incarnation does, must have a reason or purpose of corresponding greatness. We can only believe that God became man in the Person of Jesus Christ if we see that He has thus done something which could not have been done in any simpler and less astounding manner. Now, the only object worthy of this miracle above all miracles must be the salvation of mankind. This is the purpose by which Jesus Himself explained His appearing among men,— "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke xix. 10), "The Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins" (Mark ii. 10), "The Son of Man came to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark x. 45). The whole of the New Testament is filled with this truth, that Jesus Christ is the Saviour from sin and death unto righteousness and life eternal. And wherever the gospel has been carried or is being carried this is its central message, that the Supreme Deliverer has come. Before

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we examine the mode of this deliverance we must study this fact of sin, the situation of man which made so great a work on his behalf necessary.

### I. "SOMETHING WRONG" WITH THE RACE

1. *Proved even by Enemies of Religion.*—It might go without saying almost, that the whole history of man bears witness, though in varying ways and degrees, to his sense of sin. No religion has arisen which does not in some manner imply it. Indeed, the very denial of religion is the assertion that man, by having a religion at all, has always and everywhere gone wrong. The religious man believes that man is in distress, and the denier of religion insists that this belief, universal as it has been, is itself the supreme error and the mother of much misery. Both believe that the true path of life has been somehow missed, and heavy penalties have been paid for the blunder.

Now, this is a most startling set of facts, especially if we are to explain the universe, as many try to do, by some formula of natural evolution. For the doctrine which has had most vogue would teach us that no species of living things can arise except as it is in harmony with its environment. But here we find the testimony unanimous, that the species called man is infected with fatal error at the root of its distinctive life and throughout its history. If religion be true, then the voice of all religions tells us that he is at discord with his spiritual environment, and his



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moral or social miseries arise from that misfortune. If religion is all based on falsehood, we still have the same fact that man is not in harmony with his real environment, if only for this desolating reason, that he has deluded and distressed himself with the invention of a spiritual environment which has no foundation except in his diseased imagination. It does not help in the least to urge in support of the latter theory that it is the possession of a reasoning power that has thus put man wrong. For in that case a merely naturalistic evolution would have the impossible task of explaining, how nature could produce from her system of facts a form of reason which could so completely and disastrously disarrange that system and destroy the life it had evolved.

2. *Due to Man's Spiritual Nature.*—All religions assume or teach that this discord in man's life rises from his possession of a spiritual nature, through which he is consciously connected with a divine power or powers above him. Whether it be the poor fetich-worshipper, striving to avert the hostility of invisible enemies by wearing his charms ; or the worshipper of a family, or tribal, god seeking to retain his friendship by sharing their food with him, or to placate him by costly sacrifices ; or the Hindu persuading himself that the universe is full of living beings who are at once the victims and the instruments of the cruel and relentless wheel of existence ; or the monotheist believing in the supreme God whose laws of inexorable righteousness have been broken by all men,—these all accept it as a fact that man is related with a superhuman

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realm of intelligences who control his life here and hereafter, and that his relations with that realm have been disturbed somehow, to his deep and perplexing and infinite loss. Wherever the Christian gospel is carried, it finds the human heart ever ready to confess that such deep wrong exists, and that a great deliverance is required.

### II. EVIL, SUFFERING, AND SIN

It is important to distinguish between what religion calls sin and that wider word "evil" with which it is often confused. It is the confusion which Buddhism creates at this point that has rendered its method of dealing with the situation of man so inadequate. This doctrine, as we have seen, assumes that the first matter to deal with is the fact of suffering. Suffering is found everywhere in the sentient world, and appears to the impatient soul as the fundamental wrong. The aim of man must therefore be, the Buddhist holds, to inquire what are the causes of suffering, and then what are the means by which they may be avoided or defeated. That is his religion, the kind of salvation he hopes and works for. On the other hand, the Christian position is that natural suffering is a wider fact than sin, and indeed an altogether different kind of fact, due to other causes and having other results. Our religion does not call us to deal immediately and primarily with suffering, but with sin. It teaches us that the great deliverance proclaimed in the gospel can be realised even by those who continue in this life to suffer,

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while of course it also teaches us to set our hope on that final state in another world where all suffering shall have ceased to affect us.

1. *Evil in Nature*.—This, then, is to be carefully marked, that evil is a wider term than sin. There are forms of evil which cannot be called “sin” and may have nothing to do with sin, while all sin must, on the other hand, be called a form of evil. It is then described as moral evil. The term “evil” seems best understood, when it is referred to in general, as that which opposes in any individual the will to live, and by this opposition causes pain or suffering. It used to be thought appropriate to apply this word “evil” to such facts in the physical universe as earthquakes or mighty storms or the collisions of stars, and some writers still do so. It is clear, however, that these events cannot in themselves be truly called evil. They only become evil in their effects upon living beings. When we consider the plant world, some would maintain that evil certainly reigns there, because we find there the phenomena of decay and death. But our modern evolutionary science has proved decay and death among plants to be important conditions of evolution. The rustle of faded leaves, the withered flowers, the mossy consuming of fallen trees, these are not pathetic incidents in the history of forest and field. The pathos which we feel as we watch them is the shadow of man’s sorrow, and it falls athwart our own hearts. It is no part of their being. These beautiful things lived, so far as we know, without



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feeling, and they perished only that more of their kind might flourish. In such decay and death there is no evil; it is the very wonder and wisdom and power of the art of God.

It is in the world of things which not only live but feel that the fact of evil in any true sense begins to appear. For that which can feel at all seems always to be capable of feeling pleasure and pain. In so far as it feels pleasure it is in conscious possession of life; in so far as pain assails it the grip on life becomes insecure. Constituted as we are, and within the limit of our knowledge, we cannot but call that evil which thus causes pain and struggle and at last death to a form of life which once in any measure rejoiced in life. And yet even here we must note the use of that word 'measure.' It is an easy trick of thought, when we speak of pain and death, to sweep our measures of these over all the sentient creation. There are degrees of sensibility both to pain and pleasure. We see the signs of feeling in the lowest forms of animal life, but we have no reason to call their consciousness intense. Rather have we every reason for regarding pain and pleasure in the *amœba*, or the shell-fish, or even in more highly organised forms than these, extremely slight. They have neither the complex organs nor the complex lives which create or require intensity in their feelings. And yet again, in spite of that deceptive shadow of our own life, that anthropomorphism which we throw into the phrases "the struggle for existence," the "survival of



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the fit," "the extinction of the unfit," we must beware of thinking that they imply the universality of pain. Some competent observers of nature believe that the vast majority of sentient creatures hardly ever experience pain, and that death comes to them first with the benumbing of their power to feel, and then with the gentle loosening of the subtle, inner bond between life and matter. And evolutionary science has been suggesting to us that even in this world of animal life, death is one of the primary causes or conditions both of the multiplication of sentient beings and of their gradual advance towards higher and richer forms.

2. *Evil in Human Experience.*—When we come to the human race we enter a world in which all the standards must be changed. It is true that man is bound up on one side of his nature with the history of the animal world, and therefore it will not do to say that pain and death are only evil even for him. Here, too, they must have their beneficent meaning and power. Some part of this we can perhaps descry when we remember that pain is a stimulus, in some degrees of it, that even death has its high uses for the development of man's ideal nature. It is not right to assert that they are thoroughly evil unless we have proved that the suffering of pain and death brings no benefit to the life of the individual and the race. And that cannot be proved.

It may be urged against this mode of speech, that it involves too easy and shallow an optimism,

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that the darkness under which man has lived cannot be so quickly dispersed, that the fact of evil is too black and universal and bewildering to be removed by denying that it is true. But the answer must be, that such criticism comes too soon. What we have been trying to do is to discover the true seat and nature of that harsh discord, that grievous sense of irremediable wrong which marks the whole story of man, and which seems to grow more harsh and more grievous as he rises higher in mental and moral attainments. It does not at all lessen the burden of evil to see how prone men have been to extend its shadow and imagine its pang in regions where fuller knowledge shows that it does not exist as man sees it, nor is felt as man feels it. Rather this line of reflection compels us to seek in man's own consciousness for the origin of evil in its full and dark horror. The sympathy we feel for animals when they die, the pity for their pain, is not the result of calm inquiry into the amount of their sufferings or into the real value of these facts in the economy of natural evolution. We simply attribute to them what pain and death have come to mean to us.

If modern science has made it clear that the measure of evil which does exist in the form of actual pain in the sentient world is not devoid of meaning or utility, it has helped to define with more sharpness the real and dreadful burden under which the spirit of man groans, and which has made the whole world seem to him to be groaning under a like infinite weight of affliction. The

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human burden in its innermost reality is not physical but moral evil. In man we have a being who does not merely pass from one moment to another of sensation, whether it be pain or pleasure, a being who does not take death tacitly as one more swift spasm and pass away unaware and unregretted. He is possessed of all those qualities and powers which give him memory and expectation, which enable him to look at life as something to be considered and dealt with by him in its wholeness. He cherishes a love which death wrongs with a deep and lasting sorrow ; he possesses standards of value, of virtue, which death in vain has threatened to shatter. He feels that he cannot live as a rational human being if he live only as an animal, for the passion of the hour or even for the pleasures of a short lifetime. He judges his life from a point of view above and beyond death, and realises that the visible universe does not exhaust his environment nor afford him full opportunity for using all his powers in their ideal range and meaning.

Every noble system of thought, every lofty ideal of duty known to history, is a full and authoritative witness to the truth of these statements. When the Buddhist, in spite of his agnosticism about God, yet affirmed that man's life cannot be understood within the limits of his earthly birth and death, he bore this witness. When the Stoic, in recoil from the weakling fury of some and the weakling self-abandonment of others, set himself to discover the inner reason which informs the universe and planted his life on the scale of that reason, with a

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self-respect which would neither acknowledge defeat of his strong will by adversity nor court it by animal indulgence, whether he was Marcus Aurelius or Thomas Huxley, he bore the same witness. Man as a moral and a rational being is allied with and related to a system of facts with which the animal consciousness has no responsive relation. It is this fact of universal moral evil, this consciousness which pervades all human history that something is wrong at the very root of man's true life, which is interpreted by Christianity as sin.

### III. THE DOCTRINE OF SIN IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

1. *Derived from Monotheism.*—In the Old Testament we have the deepest teaching about moral evil which the world had ever heard before the coming of Christ. The reason for this fact is to be found in the teaching of the prophets about God. Their Monotheism led to their doctrine of man and of sin. At first, no doubt, the Hebrews understood by sin, as other Semitic tribesmen did, any act of disloyalty performed by the tribe, or a member of it, towards its particular god. Such breaches of law would consist in failure to perform duly the customary religious ceremonies, or in doing anything which had been placed under "the ban" (as in the case of Achan). But with the rise of prophetism, and from the days of Moses onward, a new element was introduced. For, as we saw before, Jehovah, the God of Israel, made Himself known more and more clearly as the righteous



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One, as a Being who attached infinite importance to the ideal of faithfulness, who would neither do nor brook injustice, who therefore looked for inward loyalty among His people. He demanded that they should depend wholly on His might and His truth. They must never forsake this trust nor doubt His gracious loyalty to them, however dark their days might be, however great the enemies that conquered them. Thus the relation of God and His people was transferred from the region of outward and formal ceremonialism to that of inner moral purposes. Jehovah called for "mercy and not sacrifice"; He had regard to those who "did justly and loved mercy and walked humbly with their God."

The Ten Commandments have always, and rightly, been regarded as of great significance at this point. For even though we allow that their form, being in the main negative (Thou shalt not), and referring principally to outward action, was imperfect, we must emphasise the fact that they do bear upon the sphere of personal relations with man and with God. They are ethical and not ceremonial, spiritual or personal and not formal or mechanical.

2. *The Later Prophets.*—It was with that sphere of the personal and ethical that the great prophets were almost entirely concerned. For them Jehovah was the true King of Israel. He made known His will, the will of unquestionable righteousness, and that was the law of Israel. To that will the laws and customs of His

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people should conform. In the light of that will kings should reign, judges decree justice, citizens conform the aims and habits of their lives. Social greed and corruption, tyranny and oppression, were severely condemned and threatened with appropriate punishment because they contravened the righteous will of God, and, in wronging any class of His people, wronged Him. (See especially, Amos.) Even the international relations of Israel were brought under the survey of this divine will. There, too, His people displayed their reverence or irreverence for Jehovah, their gratitude or ingratitude, and there they proved whether they believed in the perfectness of His wisdom, the supremacy of His power, the steadfastness of His grace. Hence we find in the Psalms, those reflections in pious experience of the prophetic revelations of God, that the sense of sin is awakened, not by the failure to reach an ideal, but by the consciousness of having broken the will of Jehovah (Pss. xxxii., li., etc.). The feeling of shame and humiliation was found in this, that sin was a blow aimed at a Person. The will of One had been defied whose will was the purest possession and the grandest security of Israel.

3. *Legalism*.—After the return from the Exile a new era set in for this religion. What we know as Judaism arose, with its prevailingly legalistic view of the relations of God and His people. A vast system of laws was gradually drawn up, under the impression that the supreme conception of God is that of a lawgiver and the ideal religion a code of enactments prescribing rules of

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conduct for each moment and relationship of a man's life. The result was not only a hard externalism in religious practice, but a shallow sense of sin. Only deeper souls saw that primarily God's law has to do with the heart, and that His will sheds a light upon the inner depths of motive where the mere legalist never walks, or walks only blindfolded with fumbling hands and blundering feet, feeling his way in vain.

### IV. THE TEACHING OF JESUS

1. *The Need of a Higher Standard.*—It needed that a new light should shine on the personal relations of man with God, at higher levels than ever ancient prophet had seen, except in partial, fleeting glimpses. Even as it was we must remember that no ancient people had ever attained a morality so exalted as that of the Jews. For in the Greek-Roman world of the first century all serious minds complained that no fixed standard of goodness stood before the minds of men. Rare souls might work out lofty codes of ethics for themselves, but they carried no authority over the general mass of surging minds. What was needed was a standard of righteousness as steady and more truly spiritual than the legalism of the Jews, as truly ethical and more complete, penetrating, and authoritative than any system of Platonic or Stoic philosophy. All these demands were met, and surpassed, in the Person and work of Jesus Christ. We must therefore consider the

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fact of sin as it is presented to us in the Gospels and Epistles of the New Testament.

It is sometimes suggested that there is not much said about sin in the Gospels. There is no "over-emphasis" of this disagreeable topic in those bright and genial pages, "ces charmants entretiens sur le bord du lac Génézareth," as Renan has it. This way of putting the matter has just so much to be said for it, that Jesus on this subject pursues His usual method. He gives no systematic exposition or argument about the origin or nature of sin. Nor does He persistently dwell, with hard reiterated strokes, upon certain limited aspects of moral evil. Nevertheless one can easily gather from a survey of His ministry, if not an organised doctrine of sin, at any rate a definite conception of it, which is not less terrible or harrowing than any which Christian theologians have wrought out. To some minds it will appear all the more impressive and alarming, just because it is found to have so deeply moulded His whole ministry and even directed His feet towards the Cross.

2. *The Depth of Righteousness and of Sin.*—To begin with, we must note that Jesus accepts the main principles of the Old Testament teaching, and some He carries further than they had been carried before. For example, He assumed that man is responsible to God, that the men He addressed knew or ought to have known what the righteous will of God is. More explicitly than any preceding teacher He pictures over and over



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again the fact that each man must be judged by God with a strictness worthy alike of a holy God and a rational agent. Here individualism is clearly and consistently carried out. God the Father does not love men merely in the mass, and God the Judge will likewise confront each child of the race individually with his moral task and the quality of its fulfilment. It is a fact seldom remarked but most significant, that while Jesus speaks of God so much as Father, when He deals with the responsibility of men for their conduct, He speaks of them almost always as servants and subjects of a Lord who owns and rules and judges them (see the Parables of Judgment). It is not surprising, then, to find that, far from despising law, with its penalties and rewards, Jesus upholds and even carries it further than had been done before. When He deals with this matter in the Sermon on the Mount, He distinctly affirms the permanent authority and excellence of the "commandments," and lays it down that the righteousness of His disciples must exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees (Matt. v. 20). It is not going deep enough to say merely that He means in that saying to demand sincerity instead of hypocrisy, or depth instead of superficiality. These must be implied, but only because He shows how much deeper the law of God penetrates than the scribes and Pharisees had been able to see. The law of God is not a mere matter of external conduct, of changes which a man's will works among objects outside himself like the men on a chessboard. It

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applies primarily to the inner spirit, "the heart" of the man. A good chess player may be an indifferent lover and a poor citizen, but the man who belongs to the kingdom of heaven must belong to it and to the entire range of its principles and laws, inwardly, in the quality of his inmost thought, in the direction and objects of his desire and will. It is not mere murder, it is that hatred from which the fatal deed leaps forth ; it is not the lawless act, but the faithless, self-indulgent desire ; it is not the mere words of the oath, but the lying habit of life to which the use of the oath, as a social device, bears witness, which constitute the real seat of sin. The commands, not to resist evil and to love enemies, which Jesus and so many of His missionaries have obeyed literally, lead up to the sublime utterance, "Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matt. v. 21-48). These and other words of Jesus abundantly show that in His view the sphere of moral judgment must be found not in overt acts so much as in that inmost will, that habitude of feeling, that secret home of motive and impulse where alone the active, conscious self is to be really found. There a man must be and feel and think what is worthy of God, if his deeds are to shine with a divine quality.

3. *Man as Lost*.—Some people seem to write as if this deeper view of righteousness, which Jesus gives, yields a more genial and hopeful standard for mankind. But that was not the way in which the Lord looked upon the matter. He treated all men as estranged

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from God, as morally outwith His fellowship. All men need to have the Father revealed to them by the Son; and that need is not an accident of history, it is created by the moral quality of that inner self which all men possess. He found no exception, none who did not need to be saved as from a desperate situation. When He says that He had come to save the "lost," He meant all men, alike those who clothed themselves in a deceptive garb of technical righteousness, and those whose passionate manner of life compelled them to acknowledge without cavil or assuagement that they were indeed sinners before God. When He speaks of the "lost," Jesus introduces a new element into that dread conception. He describes them as "lost" from God's point of view. It is He, the owner and Lord, the Shepherd and Father of all souls, who is represented by the shepherd and the woman and the forsaken father in the parables of Luke xv. If the lost are to be found—here is the thrilling revelation—it must be God, who has lost them, who shall also seek and find and save them all. His grace must seek them out, His pardon must blot out the unholy past, His power must change their hearts. There is then in the eyes of Jesus a universal condition of man in which he is estranged from God, and from this condition he can be saved not on his own merits nor by his own powers, but wholly and solely by the mercy of God. True, he must repent and believe, but that double movement of the spirit of man constitutes in the field of will a change which has



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been wrought upon his very self. A man must become as a little child (Matt. xviii. 2), he must pass through a transformation as drastic and complete as would be a new birth (John iii. 3).

4. *The Need of Salvation.*—To understand what sin meant to Jesus Christ, we must look not merely to His words, but to His life, to the work which He undertook to do for men. There can be no doubt that He claimed to be a Saviour, and thereby asserted that man's moral condition requires for his salvation a power from above, a personal power which has come from God. Nor can there be any doubt that His task as Saviour led Him through dark sorrow to the joy of its accomplishment. What else imposed woe on the Saviour but the woe of man's estrangement from God? If the power of His Cross means only that the spectacle of His faith which quailed not at utter darkness, and His love which died not when life itself was crucified by hate, draws the world's responsive trust and grateful love to Him,—and His death means far more than that,—yet even this much would prove that sin is a state of the human heart which only the sacrifice of the Son of God had strength to destroy. His Cross has always been felt by those who believe in Him to be a revelation not merely of the love of God in its purity and splendour (for all love is enthroned only by sacrifice), but of the bitter shame of sin. If then the Cross was in Christ's mind His means of saving the lost, its revelation to our conscience of the quality of sin is as truly and far more



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fully His actual teaching than the Sermon on the Mount or the rebuke of the hypocrites.

### V. THE APOSTOLIC TEACHING

The Apostles of Christ inherited the Jewish conception of sin. They believed that Jehovah, the only living and true God, had given the knowledge of His will to the children of Israel, and sin consisted in active and deliberate disobedience of that will. While they were taught to speak with contempt of sinners of the Gentiles, and considered them as beyond the reach of that loving-kindness which God had bestowed upon His elect nation, they were, on the other hand, aware that even among the Jews the problem of personal salvation had not been solved. They had been waiting for the hour of redemption, and now that it had come upon them they found themselves in a strangely surprising world. This comes out in characteristic ways even in their teaching about sin.

1. *The Doctrine of John.*—Thus in the writings of John sin appears as that which received the utter condemnation of God. It is a form of will which is directly hostile to His holy will, and the awakened conscience feels the poignancy of this situation. That awakening is due to the advent of the Son of God in human flesh (John i. 5, 10, 14). Henceforth we know that sin in us is a darkness which is the very opposite of that light which is God (1 John i. 5). It is also lovelessness, and

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may manifest itself as hatred towards those who deserve only our love (1 John ii. 10, 11, iii. 13-18) ; indeed, the primary sign and proof that a man has passed out of death into life is the rise of a new kind of love in his heart, which is the gift of God's Spirit. It is also lawlessness (1 John iii. 4), for law is the expression of the will of God, it reveals His commandments ; the man who sins is not born of God, but shows by his evil works that he draws his active life from the devil (1 John iii. 8). In such powerful language does this apostolic writer seek to convey the new sense of sin, in its power and its hateful nature, which the coming of Christ has created. And this is added with reiteration and great vigour, that a new and supreme commandment, a moral obligation which precedes all others, had been given in the Person of Jesus Christ. The first law of human nature now is to believe on Him, and the sin unto death is the deliberate rejection of His claims (John iii. 17-21, vi. 29, xvii. 2, 3 ; 1 John iii. 23).

2. *The Doctrine of Paul.*—It is the Apostle Paul who has written most fully and deliberately about this matter of sin, but we can only briefly describe this general point of view. Of course he looks upon all mankind as under sin. He cannot admit that the Jews escape condemnation on the ground that they were a privileged people, because they were confronted with the full force and exposed to the terrific condemnation of the divine law given through inspired law-givers and prophets (Rom. ii.-iii. 19). Nor can he admit that the Gentiles escape

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condemnation on the ground that they had no specific revelation of that law of God, because their own social habits and practices show that conscience gave them light. Do their lives show that they have fulfilled the law "written in their hearts"? Except in one passage (Rom. v. 13-21) he does not refer to the historical origin of sin, and in that passage his main interest is to find an illustration of the relation in which Christ stands to the new Humanity of which He is the head. Through Adam sin entered into the world, and by his trespass the many died. There is much in these statements with which subsequent theology became deeply concerned; but Paul does not enlarge on the subject, and we had better not make him responsible for any conclusions we may base upon this passage regarding the fall of man and original sin.

We shall best understand what Paul, as a believer in Christ and an Apostle of his gospel, taught about sin by looking at it in the light of a few of the great words which he used so freely and powerfully, such as law, grace, flesh, spirit, death, righteousness, life, etc. These were never used by him with the precision and under the limitations of technical terms. He was living in a great creative period, and the new era was taking its rise largely through the work of Christ's Spirit upon his conscience and mind. We find him, therefore, applying words which were already familiar in the religious life of his days, to the new and mighty experiences which God had wrought upon his own and other souls. This he does

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with the freedom and energy of a master of thought and of language, and not with the mere invariability of a pedant or a scholastic. For example, the word "sin" itself is now described as a quality of human action (Rom. ii. 12), and anon as a kind of spiritual force personified, a potentate (v. 21, vi. 14), a slave holder (vi. 6, 20), an alien tyrant using the members of the body as the instruments of his fatal power, and establishing there a law of its own (vii. 23, viii. 2). It is at once a state in which all men find themselves (iii. 9), and an attribute of the individual acts of each man when he transgresses the laws of righteousness (iii. 25, iv. 7). So free is the energy of his style, the insight of his mind.

(1) *Sin and Law*.—In the eyes of the Apostle it is manifest that sin is co-extensive with human life. It was in the world before "the law," the historic revelation of the will of God in the Old Testament history, was given, even from Adam to Moses. This is proved by two facts, the presence of death, which is the fruit of sin, and the working of conscience among those who have not the law. There is therefore in Paul's view a law before the Mosaic law (Rom. ii. 12–16) which carries with it the authority of the will of God. But "the law," the express revelation of His will, was given to the Jews from the faithfulness of God, and this was a supreme privilege and opportunity for that race (Rom. iii. 1–3). The giving of a law ought to be like the giving of life (vii. 10), since it not only reveals that will which ought to be obeyed, but also announces the rewards of obedience and the penalties of



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disobedience. But, as a matter of fact, the law encountered an enemy mightier than itself already seated on the throne of man's heart. "The law was weak through the flesh" (viii. 3). Nay more, as the law continued to be pressed upon man's attention it seemed to aggravate the sinful conditions (v. 20, vii. 13 ; Gal. iii. 19). The light, as it fell in upon one chamber after another, displayed failure and transgression and shame in them all. It seemed like a curse this disturber of man's immoral peace, like a betrayer of innocence this voice which brought all men under guilt. "By the law is the knowledge of sin" (Rom. iii. 20). But this terrible function of the law, when announced as the inexorable will of God, was the best preparation for Christ (Gal. iii. 19-25). By introducing into the world a higher view of God's demands upon man and a deeper sense of man's native inability to meet those demands, the need of a Saviour was made clear. No man who has felt the sting of sin can do aught but welcome the sound of a Redeemer's voice.

(2) *Sin and Flesh*.—Another aspect of sin is brought out by Paul's use of the antithetic terms "flesh" and "Spirit," especially in such passages as Romans vi.-viii. and Galatians vi. 13-24. There we find those two words used to describe the double nature of man. In the lower, "the flesh," sin has its seat of power and is able to repress all attempts of the higher principle to obtain full control of life. Of course the word "flesh" must not be restricted merely to the physical frame and its appetites, for the works of the flesh include forms of sin, such as

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covetousness (Rom. vii. 7), sorcery, jealousy, and others (Gal. v. 20) which do not properly have their seat in animal passion, but in those desires which are stirred by the powers of the mind. And yet the word flesh is conveniently used as describing at once that main centre, or the lower part of us, around which the evil will tends to gather its interests, and that terrible revenge of a wronged nature by which that lower part becomes the dominating force in a human character, instead of the obedient and pliant instrument of "the spirit," the nobler intellectual and moral self. Sin is therefore the whole state of disorder into which the dominion of the flesh throws the natural relations of our complex being.

(3) *Sin and Grace*.—Another aspect is brought out by the Apostle's contrast of man's sin with the grace of God. The breaking of the law of righteousness has thrown man into a condition both of guilt and helplessness. That he is guilty means that he has done what is wrong, and that he must encounter the appropriate consequences. That he is helpless means that no conceivable efforts of his own can ever lift him out of this condition. Man cannot put himself right with God, because, if he attempts it by fulfilment of the law, he finds himself involved in a deeper sense of guilt the further that law penetrates with its holy light into his heart. And his fellow-men help his defeat, for self-redemption can be no mere individual matter achieved in isolation. A man depends on his social inheritance, and no man has yet found a mode of life among his



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fellows in which he can clear himself of sin. He continues to share the imperfect ideals and the unhallowed impulses of his "set," his race, and his generation. Paul seems to have felt this even when his "set" pronounced him blameless (Phil. iii. 3-6, cf. Rom. vii. 7-10). But Paul understood the situation only when "a righteousness" (Rom. iii. 21), a way of getting right with God, had appeared to him as the act and gift of God Himself. The grace of God had suddenly lifted him into new relations with the moral universe. That grace was simply the holy will of God showing itself as an immeasurable love. This was done for Paul and for all men in the Person and Work of Christ, and in the universal offer of the mercy of God, the forgiving and delivering power of God. Henceforth this offer of the mercy, the personal love of God, becomes the fundamental law of the life of man. It reveals the hideous nature of sin as even the law could not do. None know sin as do those who have looked into the heart of mercy. From that centre there streams such purity, such love, that the conscience is at once appalled and encouraged. Sin stands revealed as a quality of the human will which can never be cleansed except by an act of sheer forgiveness, and only the will of God can do that. The Cross alone proves what that mode, the only conceivable mode, of destroying the sin of man without destroying man has cost Him from whose love beyond all our dreams of love His Son came forth to heal and hallow our great woe.



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And in that case a new form of sin has been made possible whenever this grace of God is itself directly, deliberately, and permanently rejected. This must be the nature of the deepest, the last, the eternal sin.

### VI. THE MODERN SITUATION.

These, then, are the elements of the Christian view of that moral evil which, as we saw, is present everywhere in the experience of man. We cannot here enter upon the great discussions of the nature of sin which have arisen in the course of Christian theology. But a few words must be said about the present situation of this doctrine.

1. *Sources of Attack on the Bible Doctrine.*—There are three sources from which attack is made upon it : (1) First, the doctrine of evolution has been used by some to prove that sin is a natural stage in the progress of man from the immoral to the spiritual realms of life. It is the dominance of the lower and selfish appetites over the higher power of forming social and unselfish ideals. (2) Second, the conception of the beneficence of God, whether called His Fatherhood or not, has been used to still the fear of penalty and assuage the pangs of repentance. If God chooses, it is urged, He can pardon sin on any conditions which He may ordain. An atonement is an impossible device, and its invention by the perverse ingenuity of the Apostles was an unnecessary and burdensome addition to the



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sweet and persuasive and comfortable message of Jesus. (3) Third, we have the subtle opiate of pantheism, working in various forms. It appears in some sects of theology, in much of what is called New Thought, and even underlies Christian Science. Whenever it is said "God is all, and all is good"; whenever we are bidden to crush sin by ceasing to fear it, by merely forming habits of thought which deny it or ignore it; whenever we are urged not to deal with it as a matter between us and the holy will of a personal God, but to cultivate "healthy-minded" freedom from dread or sorrow or penitence of soul, we are in the presence of a pantheistic view of the universe. That way disaster lies, the lowering of personality in us by denying it in God, the impoverishing of morality by the removal of a judgment throne, the withering of love by the removal of the atoning cross from the centre of history and from the heart of God.

2. *So-called Evolutionary Explanation of Sin.*—Much is being written at present regarding the origin of sin with a view to a clearer understanding of its nature. Especially are efforts being made to explain it, as we have said above, in the light of evolution. Sin marks that stage, we are told, in the development of our world at which reason and the power of living by ideals appeared in human nature. Then the appetites which belong to the animal part of man became the means of sin. In themselves they are not sinful, but pure and beneficent, and indeed necessary to the very

existence and development of the animal world. Even in man they only become sinful, because man ceases to use them for their true and restricted ends. He turns them from social and racial purposes to private pleasures. Hunger, which is pure, becomes greed, which is sinful. Sleep becomes sloth. The sense of power becomes tyranny. Self-love becomes selfishness, and self-respect pride. It is from this point of view that the absurd, smart saying arose that sin is the mark of "the Fall upwards," an incident in the ascent of man.

There is a certain amount of valuable truth in all this, and henceforth theology must take account of it. But as a real explanation of the nature of sin it is quite futile. It helps us to understand vice and crime, or social disorder. It is of some value in the psychology of sinful habit and conduct. But its failure to explain sin arises from the fact that the term "sin" has no meaning outside of the religious consciousness. It is amazing to read discussions of the matter which completely ignore the modern history and philosophy of religion, which only touch the religious view of sin after all these evolutionary commonplaces have been set down, when the attempt is being made to relate them with Christianity.

The fact is, that the sense of sin begins, like all elements of human consciousness, in dim, confused, and vague forms, but always in the religious atmosphere. Sin, as a scientifically used term, cannot be applied except to the sense of broken relations, of "something

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wrong," between a man (or a tribe), and the invisible power (or powers) whom he (or the tribe) worships. Even conscience, or the moral consciousness, when taken merely in its social aspect, does not give us the clue to sin, unless that consciousness is viewed, as Kant viewed it, as a function of the religious nature of man. It is only when man is aware, however dully, of his relation to a power, a judge, an owner, a master, however poorly conceived, to whom he is responsible and on whose will his happiness depends, that the fact called sin takes its place in history. That consciousness can now be traced along the trunk line of religious development from its crude origins in Chaldea and Arabia to its full understanding in the souls of Christian Apostles and the saints whom their message has created.

3. *Sin and Man's Place in Nature*.—It remains to say a few words on that with which we set out, namely, the fact and problem of evil. (1) First, we may repeat in a word that modern science forbids us to attribute to the natural world the amount of evil, in the form of suffering, which it has been the custom of many to see there. And further, science teaches us to regard physical pain as an instrument which a wise Providence may use for worthy ends. (2) Secondly, the vast sorrow and hideous sufferings of humanity must be looked at in the light of that rational freedom which is the divinely ordained basis of his nature, and of that sin which he has made the abnormal basis of his life.

(1) *The Invasion of Nature*.—We must remember



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that it is because man has freedom and reason that he is able to put himself in a deeper relation than that of mere animals, with the infinite intricacies and forces of nature. He invades the ordered events of the world, he seeks to rearrange its facts elaborately for his own ends. He builds his cities on swamps, and pestilence ensues. He builds them again and again where earthquakes have occurred and will occur, and encounters the repeated desolations of Messina and San Francisco. He penetrates the quiet fields with his mines, half knowing and half careless of the facts, and ruinous explosions sometimes reward his daring. He sows his seed generation after generation, cuts down the forests, and then sees rainless skies above his head, an exhausted soil under his feet, and famine at his door. What does it all mean? Not that God has put man into a hostile world to torture him, nor that God has no control for His own final purposes of the order which He has created. But this, that the history of man even in his relations with nature is a co-partnery with God. God, for His own blessed ends, has created man with free will and reason, as his co-worker. And behold how vast are the changes on the surface of our world which man is making! There will soon be found no spot on earth which is not more or less humanised, clothed with new meaning and even changed in its appearance for man's ends and in man's taste. But into this work man carries his whole moral nature, and the fortunes which he encounters are the results of his character as well



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as of his reason striving to master the powers of nature. And the work itself is reacting on his character as well as gradually unfolding the infinite resources of his reason. Is not this the end which God had in view when the foundations of our world were laid ?

(2) *The Cost of Freedom.*—But when God chose to create a free moral being who should at last attain to full and unspeakable and eternal fellowship with Himself, He created a nature with whose laws He must Himself henceforth reckon. God can no more treat man as a mere thing, and compel him to be good or happy, than He can treat a stone as an angel to give it wings of light and songs of a happy heart. The righteousness, the holiness of God, demands that He shall treat a stone as a stone and free man as free man. This means that in the working out of human destiny by man's uses of nature and worship of God, the laws of those two sets of relations must be fully and constantly and at all costs observed. There shall be joy and pain, defeat and victory, thrilling delight and black, dull woe, as man in his moral freedom invades the harmonious unity of nature for his own ends, and as he invades the presence of God with his prayers and tears, his rebellion or his trust. In the exercise of his freedom man has sinned. When and how this situation arose does not much matter. It is here, a real and most desolate fact. The mystery of it lies in the free will of man, and the mystery of that in the supreme will and final purpose of God. It is the factor of sin in human con-

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sciousness which casts its shadow on death, which makes suffering hideous, which therefore renders the death and suffering of all sentient creatures darker in man's view than they really are for them. It is this defect in his moral nature which hinders, diverts, and misuses his rational power over nature. A purer race will abolish pestilence, reduce accident to a minimum, and learn to see inevitable pain and even death steadily in the light of the indisputable love and mighty wisdom of God.

(3) *Sin and the Gospel*.—That purer race is being produced by the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. The gospel reveals God in a personal relation with the evil of history of which no religion has ever had any conception. He is not a blind energy submerged in the mass which it propels on a dark course toward an unknown end, any more than He is a cold and transcendent Deity living in remote blessedness beyond the waves and tumults of pain and sin. He has entered into human life, has made its experience His own, has been “made perfect through suffering,” has “tasted death for every man.” This is the sublime message, this the miracle above all miracles, which the final religion is carrying to our hearts. The pantheist of the Orient will be roused from his despair by the fresh hope which this fact gives to every individual and the glory it sheds on the lowliest of the sons of men. The Mohammedan will be subdued to a new sweetness of faith, a new purity in his hope, by this conquering word of grace,

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mightier than the sword of Islam. Evil is transmuted for the man of faith, as by a divine alchemy, from a leaden doom to a golden weapon of blessing. And this is done because the root of evil in man's heart, sin, has been condemned on the Cross and is being swept out of individual conscience swiftly, out of social life gradually, by the indwelling Spirit of the holy and wise and mighty God of Love and Life.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE CHRISTIAN MESSAGE OF SALVATION.

WE have seen that the Christian religion frankly and earnestly looks on the condition of human nature as one of sin. It is not blind to the fact of suffering, nor deaf to the woeful cries of bereavement and defeat. But it does deal more firmly and directly than any previous religion with that element which underlies all our experience and which it denominates without palliation or subterfuge as sin. The state of sin is, as we have seen, one in which the soul is consciously separated from God. This separation is of course not physical nor even metaphysical. For God is and must be the support of our bodily and our mental organism and life from the first moment to the last; we all "live and move and have our being in Him." It is a moral separation, a breach in the mutual fellowship of the Creator of all with His rational and responsible creatures, of Father and children. That this moral rupture can continue indefinitely without reacting on the physical and intellectual life of man is inconceivable. The nature of man is a unity, and a disaster so central as this must wreak its doom on the whole round of his



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being, and become manifest in every aspect of his active and conscious life.

We have seen, further, that sin is realised in definite sins. We call it a state because it is in all men at first a form of the moral consciousness, an inner relation of the conscious self to God ; but it could not be a real state unless it were expressed and defined in action. Indeed, it is usually in and through the sinful colour of his positive deeds that a man discovers himself to be in a state of sin. And finally, this whole set of conditions, amid which an Apostle must write, "there is none righteous, no not one," involves the dread facts of penalty and doom. The being that is made capable of living in harmony and union with God, in a universe which is by its very nature built to bless and sustain that harmony, must find that the order of things is against him when he transgresses the conditions of that relationship. Hence at every point sin receives its inevitable fruitage of pain and at last of death.

This being the situation to which the universal consciousness bears witness with essential unanimity, though in varying phrase and temper, we must see how the religion which professes to be absolute and final, and therefore of universal power and authority, proposes to deal with it.

### I. THE SUBSTANCE OF SALVATION.

We shall first consider the *nature* of that deliverance which Christianity offers to a sinful and a sorrowful race.

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And it will conduce to clearness if we begin by emphasizing its difference from certain other methods which have been proposed. (1) It is, of course, thoroughly distinct from the Buddhist method, which rests upon the idea that the root of that woe which pervades the entire universe of sentient beings is existence itself and the will to live. Christianity opposes to this the directly contrary doctrine. It offers life, and life more abundantly. It proposes to make existence a very joy, to fill the cup of human nature with an experience which is all-pure and all-blessed and everlasting. (2) It also departs from all those methods which are associated with the mysteries of Greece and the so-called "occultist" proceedings of some Hindu sects. The mere development of psychic powers, even if possible, has no influence on a man's relations with God, nor any necessary influence for good on his moral character. For the very essence of the religious problem of man, as viewed in the New Testament, is to be found in the personal relations of God and man. The moral issue is primary and supreme. (3) The gospel stands in stark contrast with the message of Mohammed in this, that it is a message of redemption and that it is based upon a deed of sacrifice on the cross in which the eternal God Himself was both the agent and the subject. The might of God is engaged on behalf of man in and through His sympathy, as well as His righteousness, His mercy in historic deeds of salvation as well as His severity in judgment.

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It will be convenient for our present purpose to set forth the substance of the Christian salvation under three heads, the first of which will be more fully treated than the others.

1. *Forgiveness of Sins*.—In the first place, it offers and confers the forgiveness of sins.

(1) *In the Gospels*.—The Gospels make it plain that in the ministry of Jesus this divine act occupies a most prominent and challenging position. The Synoptic Gospels describe with unanimous care the incident of the healing of the paralytic (see Mark ii. 3–12), when Jesus not only put the forgiveness of sins in a place of importance above that of healing a fell disease, but claimed that this was the very work which He had authority to do upon the earth. Indeed, when he first began His ministry, He took up the message of the prophet John as his starting-point, and preached that repentance which has no motive and no issue unless it be accompanied and blessed by pardon (Mark i. 4, 14, 15). Although there is no mere iteration of a formula in His great and creative ministry, although He deals broadly and sympathetically, and therefore differently, with the men and women who come into contact with Him, yet He never obscures the fact that their deepest relation is with God, and the deepest element in that relation is moral. No man can face the Father through Jesus without feeling immediately that his conscience has been excited to intense activity, and that the ethical issues are foremost as well as supreme. This is the



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point at which, subjectively, the absolute union of ethics and religion is for ever established by Christianity. It is the point from which ceremonialism and an unholy occultism both shrink back in hatred and scorn ; of this the cases of Simon the Pharisee (Luke vii. 36-50) and Simon Magus (Acts viii. 9-24) are good illustrations. The former case was dealt with by Jesus in words of tender and immortal beauty. He defended the unconventional gratitude of the woman, not because she was a sinner of a certain type, but because she was a sinner ; and He conveyed to Simon the warning that *his* first need was a forgiveness which might break open the pent-in love of his heart, and that he had as great need of forgiveness as she. Self-righteousness and self-abandonment to passion are both the enemies of love. The one starves it in an iron-bound cell, the other murders it in a garden of luxury. The only deliverer and restorer of love is the word of forgiveness from the heart of God.

(2) *In the Apostolic Message.*—The story of the Apostolic Church carries from city to city the new great word “forgiveness.” It is new not in its syllables and outward sound, nor in its mere lexical meaning. But it is new as the very heart of good tidings from God to man which were made possible on the Cross and witnessed by the Resurrection of Jesus. The Apostle Peter found himself proclaiming it under the overmastering *afflatus* of Pentecost ; and henceforth he and the rest of the brethren went out farther and farther



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into the world, announcing that Jesus is the Christ, and that every one who believes on Him "shall receive remission of sins." In the writings of Paul and of John, and of course in the Epistle to the Hebrews, the fact is the same. While the first-named Apostle is, like his Master, free from narrow bondage to words and has varied ways of approaching the soul, he is never for a moment untrue to, or neglectful of, the vital and central importance of this experience. Indeed, by a natural reaction of thought he does once speak as if forgiveness of sins were a phrase which summed up the whole meaning and power of our redemption (Col. i. 14.).

(3) *The Meaning of Forgiveness.*—In the idea of forgiveness two elements are present, one negative and the other positive. According to the former, sin ceases to be the determiner of relations between God and man. God as it were wipes out the record of wrong deeds, removes them from over the man's head as far as east is from the west. He does not deal with that man now and henceforth as a guilty man. According to the latter element, God takes the penitent into His glorious fellowship. Henceforth he is to be thought of in our heart, and he is to the heart of God as a son at home, as a lost treasure recovered to the joys and uses of its owner. His past is no longer to intrude its shadow, a shadow which is more solid and high than Alpine barriers, between his heart and God, between his thought of God and the deep joy of that name. In

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the language of Paul, he is now "justified" or reckoned and dealt with as righteous, as standing in right relations with God (Rom. iv. ; Gal. iv.).

(4) *Removal of Penalty*.—It is evident that in this great act the first and fundamental penalty of sin, from which all others flow according to spiritual and natural law, has been abolished. Separation from God, alike in His will and in man's will, is at an end, and a union is established from which henceforth the whole life is to take its direction and meaning, its spirit and power. It is true that many of the penalties of past sin remain, and their bitterness must continue to be experienced. But even that fact is transmuted from a curse into a blessing. Humility and patience are deepened, faith is nourished by this constant demand upon its exercise, peace is sought and possessed amid the din of the Holy War. And the man of faith is inspired to hold that the mighty wisdom and grace of God can gradually work out of his own life, and from the lives of those whom he has wronged, the last trace of his hideous past. The horrid and un-Christian doctrine that we must carry the scars of our sins for ever upon our persons and in our memories, which is sometimes illustrated in the shallowest way by smatterers in physiology and psychology, is to be rejected as an insult to God and as an injury to many a perturbed conscience. The forgiveness of sins is a complete act of the love of God, and its whole wondrous, pure, and blessed issues are to be read only in the deepest out-

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cries of a sincere penitence and the vast claims of a measureless trust.

2. *Deliverance from the Power of Sin.*—But these words are taking us over into our next topic. The Christian salvation implies deliverance from the dominion of sin and evil. Both words must be used here for reasons contained in our discussion of sin in another chapter. The dominion of sin is much referred to by the Apostle Paul, alike as a fact of human experience and as a matter with which the gospel is qualified to deal most powerfully. In his famous seventh chapter of Romans he sets forth the inward and fruitless struggle by which a man tries to rid himself of sin when he is confronted with the whole claim and quality of the divine law. He is not considering the case of those who have formed to themselves ideals of manhood and conduct, no doubt often noble and high, and have set themselves to follow rules of virtue and self-respect. Happily, the number of those is not inconsiderable, and their attainments are among the most moving glories of the story of man. He has in view the conscience which is searched by the law of God, the heart which is trying to match itself against the claims of a righteousness both living and real, penetrating and relentless. In that presence every man confesses that Paul wrote of every man when he said, "To will is present with me, but to do that which is good is not. To me who would do good, evil is present." The bitter cry, "Who shall deliver me out of the body of this



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death ? ” which he uttered, he also answered for us all. The dominion of sin has been broken by the coming of Christ. Through Him new relations to God are established which include this, that the Spirit of God, the blessed and wonderful indwelling of God Himself, enters into a man’s heart. Henceforth that man, acting in new relations with God and the whole moral universe, lives from new motives, for new ends. He is a renewed man, a regenerate soul (John iii. 3 ; Eph. ii. 5, iv. 23, 24 ; 2 Cor. v. 17). His habits of thought are changed, for he minds the things of the Spirit (Rom. viii. 5, etc.). His instinctive feelings rise as out of a new well, and graces appear in his tone and temper, words and ways, which look like fruit of a heavenly power (Gal. v. 22). The Epistles teem with illustrations of this wonderful freedom from the thralldom of habitual sin, of moral blindness, of self-seeking and self-will (Rom. vi. 12-14).

3. *The Immortal Life*.—The general idea of salvation in the New Testament includes not only the giving of fellowship with God and release from the slavery of sin, but also the possession of eternal life.

(1) *Eternal Life*.—It is true that this phrase does often refer to the quality of life rather than its duration, but the latter element is never excluded, and indeed is always implied. From no use of it in the New Testament can the idea of permanence be withdrawn without wrecking its whole beauty and power. Nor can the phrase be so etherealised as to extrude the element of



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personality. It is personal immortality with which the New Testament is concerned. It knows nothing of such mock immortalities as that which is said to consist in joining "choirs invisible," when in the same breath it is alleged that these choirs are not vivid, intense, and triumphant souls, but only the posthumous influences of gracious and beneficent lives that have ceased for ever upon the night. On these influences the Christian message lays a new and splendid emphasis, just because it conceives of all human lives as passing on, each self unshorn of its selfhood, revealed in its true and everlasting reality, into realms of fuller action and vaster experience.

(2) *Moral Power of the Christian Hope.*—The New Testament teaching about the future life is among the most remarkable, because most potent and most joyous, of all its creative gifts to the human consciousness. With all their usual characteristic differences, these apostolic writers agree in certain fundamental features of their doctrine. They lived in a world where much was said and thought about the underworld to which the souls of men were hurried at death. To most that was a mere region of shadows, and vain yearnings; to none was it a living and purifying and inspiring hope. Christianity alone made it that. It taught that Christ had opened the gates of life to all believers. As His resurrection was a pledge to His disciples of His unbroken union with them, that union again was a pledge of their unbreakable union with Him, of their ultimate

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share in His resurrection glory. The region beyond death was made definite, imaginable, glorious for their faith and love by the Person of the Risen Christ. All vagueness, uncertainty, gloom had vanished from the thought of that which follows death. It was replaced by the certainty that the real and everlasting Lord, Jesus Christ, most human and most divine, would, nay must by a moral necessity, bring the men, in whose very hearts He reigned supreme, to the full fruition of their hopes. "We shall see Him," was the song of their lips. "To depart and be with Christ" was the strong desire which made prison cells the vestibules of the heavenly palace, and martyr fires the rapture of their souls by His victorious hands. Over the whole range of the human earthly life their hope, literally a new hope, shed its ennobling and purifying light. A new sanctity was seen in human ties, a new grandeur in human responsibility. If for a time in the post-Apostolic Church natural misinterpretation and unhealthy enthusiasm seemed to rob this world of meaning, and the vast importance of earthly history grew small, that only proves how mighty and real was the deliverance which the non-Christian spirit experienced when it passed into the Christian faith, how glorious was this sense of rebound from age-long despair to the intensity of this consciousness of eternal life which was possessed by each heart in Jesus Christ.

To sum up, it may be said that the substance of the Christian salvation consists, on the one hand, in

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a conscious union with God, union which is realised not in ecstasies, but in the open moral fellowship of a penitent, trustful man with the holy and merciful will of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. On the other hand, it consists in the positive assurance of personal triumph over all evil. The word evil must here be used in its widest meaning to include sin working through the flesh, misfortune and human sorrow working through natural and social events to bruise the heart and daunt the faith, and death itself. "In all these things we are more than conquerors" is the assertion of the spirit that has tasted the great salvation and enjoys the peace of God. Nothing can be named or conceived which can "separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. viii. 31-38). That is Christian salvation. (Compare with Rom. viii.; 2 Cor. iv. 7-v. 10, xi. 21-xii. 10; Heb. xii. 1-13; 1 Pet. iii. 8-iv. 5; John xvi. 1-33; Revelation).

## II. THE DIVINE ACTS OF SALVATION.

The Christian religion is separated by an immeasurable distance from all others, in that here alone God is found to have wrought out the glorious salvation described above by unique, direct, immediate action of His own on the plains of human history. Others, like Hinduism and Buddhism, may try to discover and describe psychological disciplines and moral machinery by which the soul is supposed to evolve its own deliver-



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ance, or like Mohammedanism set forth the law of God as a pathway by which the righteous may travel towards His far-off throne in the unseen. But the gospel of Christ alone presents God as having entered upon the limitations of human experience, that He might in His own incarnate life reconstruct from their very foundations the right moral relations of humanity with Himself, and on those establish the transcendent experience of actual, conscious fellowship with Himself. The essential condition for this Divine work was of course created in the act of Incarnation which has been discussed in an earlier chapter. Without resuming that discussion, it will be enough here to remind ourselves that the primary or real end of the Incarnation was to establish not only physical or intellectual, but moral relations between God and man. The essence of the great act lies in this, that the Divine Person does not merely watch the experience of human beings, however sympathetically or understandingly; nor even, if we may dare to put it so, does the Absolute Consciousness remain content with its experience as the Creator of human nature, as the Lord of human history, the product and object and burden of His eternal will. There is a further and awful step by which the Eternal Self willed to taste human experience *from the human side*, to know it as the created, dependent, growing, struggling, attaining human spirit alone can know it. That step was taken when the Son of God laid aside the form of God, when the Word became flesh. Henceforth



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God knows both sides of the fact of man, as it appears to the Creator and Lord of All and as it appears to the creature in his submissive dependence.

This sublime act of God derives its glory from the purpose which prompted it, the great and holy love for man in his sin, in the disaster which had overtaken his soul. Through the Incarnation an end was to be achieved, a work to be done, which was possible in no other way. This work may be considered under three heads, Atonement, Resurrection, and Impartation of the Holy Spirit. These taken together are the divine acts which constitute the substance of the gospel of Christ, and which produce in receptive man the substance of salvation described above.

1. *The Atonement.*—This word is used in Christian theology to describe the At-one-ment or making one of man and God through the work of our Lord Jesus Christ, and especially through His sacrifice on the Cross.

(1) *The Gospels and the Death of Christ.*—The mere fact that we have the four Gospels before us, and that one of them was written by Luke, the close companion of the Apostle Paul on so many of his journeys, proves that the early Apostles did not fail to appreciate the surpassing value of the earthly ministry and especially of the teaching of Jesus. There is not an Epistle which is not saturated with its influence even where verbal connection cannot be traced. But even the Gospels reveal the exceptional importance which the Apostolic

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Church as a whole, as well as those authors, assigned to the death and resurrection of Jesus by the exceptional fulness and force with which these events are described. With marvellous care and veracity the narratives reveal to us the attitude of the various personalities engaged in those portentous scenes. We must name here only the steady, unsurprised, masterful will of Jesus. That He is engaged in a task which shakes His soul to the depths, that for Him the way to the Cross is a long agony whose elements are not those of a calm and triumphant martyrdom, is thrown into startling perspective by His air of majesty, by the evidence that His will is not being overmastered by the feeble ingenuities and plots and malignities of men, but is guided by the purpose of the Father and His own complete absorption in that purpose.

In his own teaching it would seem that He had said little about the final meaning of His death. Two sayings, to which we have already referred, are, however, explicit and sufficient. One word from him who is engaged in a great work may be all we need to reveal what that work is for his own mind, the end he has in view and the reason for his method. When, therefore, Jesus says that the Son of Man had come in order to serve humanity even to the extent of giving His life as a ransom for many, and that His body would be broken for His disciples, His blood shed to establish the New Covenant, we have the fullest light thrown upon His own purpose as He

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went through such agony with such majestic power. By means of His sacrificial death He intended to reconstruct the relations of God and man. If we accept those words as His, if we believe that at the very centre of the whole matter His disciples cannot have completely misunderstood and misrepresented His mind, then in those last scenes we must behold the Son of God and Son of Man as it were getting within and under the whole moral system in which God and man are related, and transforming it by the fact that He died as He did, in full consciousness of the reasons and issues of His sublime deed.

(2) *The Apostles and the Cross.*—When we turn to the Acts and Epistles, we find that His purpose has been fulfilled. Men do live in new and hitherto undreamt of relations with the eternal and all-holy God. Christ incarnate and on the Cross has actually made the infinite change. There is no difference of opinion among modern scholars about the place which the Apostles assign to that redeeming death. They all speak of it as connected in the deepest and most vital way with the forgiveness of sin and entrance upon the life of reconciliation with God (Gal. 3; Rom. 3; Heb. ix. x.; 1 John 4). In a large number of cases they refer in a general and yet definite manner to the fact that He died on our behalf, that He bore our sins, that in His death God condemned sin and revealed righteousness, that in this act—the central act in the relations of God to human history—God revealed or made avail-



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able for the appropriation of men a divine, complete, and life-giving righteousness. In some cases they use language which is in harmony with the word "ransom" used by Jesus in Mark x. 45 (1 Cor. vi. 20, vii. 23; 1 Pet. i. 18). In a much larger number they associate the meaning and power of his work on the Cross with the sacrificial system of the Old Testament, often with special emphasis upon the shedding of His blood, thus harmonising with that other great saying of His at the Last Supper (Rom. iii. 25, 26; Gal. iii. 10-18; Heb. ix. x.; "blood" in 1 Pet. i. 10; Rev. i. 5, etc.; "propitiation" in 1 John ii. 2, iv. 10, etc.).

(3) *The Modern Dislike of this Doctrine.*—Much of the modern revolt against the doctrine of the Atonement is due to the influence of two ideas. In the first place, it has been too often described as if it were a kind of legal formality, as if God had merely defended Himself before the law, an institution above His own will, a bar at which even He must be tried for showing mercy to man. In the second place, it has been too often described as if sin and its penalties were quantities in an account book which could be transferred by a legal process from one person to another, as if the sinless Son of God by enduring infinite penalties could cancel the claims of the law against the infinite guilt of man. It is clear that such ideas of the work of Atonement are too easy, too superficial, to explain so great a deed. And yet it is also clear that it would be as truly superficial and easy-going to dismiss the whole matter as



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absurd and morally impossible. The Christian experience of reconciliation with God is real and unique, and its dependence upon the death of Christ not only pervades the entire, vast course of Christian history, but is traceable to His own consciousness, to His own mind and will through the Apostles whom He taught and inspired. Somehow He did by His sacrifice on the Cross really change the moral relations of God and man. We must be content with a very brief statement of the matter.

(4) *The Cost of Righteousness in a World of Sin.*—When the gospel went forth it was the announcement to all the world of the Fatherhood of God. In other words, it was the announcement that God has willed to forgive the sins of all who repent and put their trust in Him, and to unite each believer with Himself in His own Spirit of life and holiness and love. But in this offer of mercy God is dealing with His own relations to the history of man, as well as with man's historical relations with Him. What are His moral relations with man? They rise from His original purpose to produce in human nature a kind of righteousness which is only possible where free will exists, and where the will, the character of God is loved and chosen and obeyed at all costs and above all other attractions. This is the meaning of the kingdom of God, which can be nothing else than a society of free spirits, of moral beings, in each and all of whom His own holy nature is perfectly reflected. Throughout the history of man's conscience and His dealings with man's character, that

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has been the object of God. But since man has sinned, the fulfilment of that glorious end can only be accomplished through an initial act on God's side of forgiveness which shall produce, on man's side, repentance and trust. Manifestly this cannot be done in a mere verbal offer. Words alone have no weight with conscience, for in conscience one self faces another self in concrete relations. It must have deeds in which the very self is given, in which the very relations are established which words shall henceforth describe and urge. Words open doors, but deeds rear the structures, the shrine of the Spirit, to which they admit. The word of the gospel presupposes some living relation of which it is the expression, some act of God which burns its way to passionate utterance through hearts upon whom its weight and glory fell. This act we have in the offering of Christ.

But that deed on the Cross was the fulfilment of righteousness! The eternal, primal ideal of God, so to speak, concerning man was now an accomplished fact. No longer did he behold His idea of a righteous man and actual man in direct contrast to one another. A free will had now lived and died under human conditions which had trusted, obeyed His will out of perfect love and in face of the utmost trial. The Righteous Man was at last a fact.

But, on the other hand, this great deed was conditioned throughout its history by the presence and fact of human sin. It was sin that brought the severest pressure to bear upon that holy will of Jesus, sin that tempted Him,

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opposed Him, betrayed Him, hated Him, condemned Him through human hearts. He even seems to have tasted that deepest and last of all the issues of sin, the sense of dereliction, the mysterious and awful desolation of soul which made Him cry out, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" In that darkness He tasted death indeed, and yet held on in His way of trust, founding His faith on God even when all reality seemed to slip from under His soul. Christ paid the utmost price of righteousness where all seemed fashioned and concentrated for its destruction. In Him through that death on the Cross God stands in a new, concrete relation both with the righteousness which He had planned, and which the human consciousness had failed to attain, and with the sin which had become the real moral quality of man. Sin had been endured by God in Christ, and righteousness had been made real by God in Christ, and each of them involved the other. In the very act of proving, as Christ did, that there is nothing He would not pay as the price of righteousness, He revealed in the heart agonies of a living self the divine hatred and eternal condemnation of sin. The eternal will is realized in the temporal fact. Henceforth God lives in a new relation with the moral history and nature of man.

(5) *The Cost of Love for a World in Sin.*—But this strange story of the heart of God, this most wonderful revelation of the character of God, not in general human fortunes and not in prophetic utterances, but in an experience which was God's own experience, in a deed



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which was God's deed upon Himself, within the conditions of humanity, had a purpose beyond itself. "God spared not His Son, but delivered Him up for us all." "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son." If He has proved that there is no price He would not pay for righteousness, and so condemned sin in the very act of realising that righteousness, He has also proved that there is no price He will not pay, save only righteousness itself, for love of the sinner. Here we touch the incredible and inestimable thing which we call mercy. For it is just conscience itself, with its sense of guilt, of utter unworthiness, which finds an infinite difficulty in accepting the assurance of the love of God. It is not the prevalence of evil, not the mystery of suffering, which has thrown the darkest shadow upon the name of God. It is the sense of sin. From that has arisen the dread of God, the conviction that He must, just because He is the holy and righteous One, stand opposed for ever to the will that had made sin its life and found in self instead of God the spring and end of conduct. The awakened conscience does not adopt the easy way of some modern theologians and distinguish between sin and the sinner, concluding that God sees them apart. Rather does it identify sin and self so as to say and feel, "I am the sinner, without me my sin would not exist. The stain and shame rests on me, and not on a mere abstraction called sin. The only way to destroy my sin is to destroy myself, for sin is the quality of my will in the actual relation in



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which I have lived." It is upon the heart that so speaks that the love of God falls from the Cross of Christ.

There is no explaining love, there can be no exposition or defence of mercy. It flows from that in the very being of God which is beyond the reach of reason, and could not have been invented by the most daring imagination of man. To grasp the love of God, before Christ, man must have transcended the realm of conscience, have passed beyond the judgment bar to invade the inviolate heart of the Eternal, which was inconceivable and impossible. But in the death of Christ, the Son of God, the reverse movement has taken place. It is God who has invaded the violated soul of man, who has brought the scene of judgment upon the plane of history, and through the very horror upon the Cross has revealed love for man, and the will to take him into sonship and holy peace. That work of realising the Divine righteousness was not done merely for its own sake, but that God might so reach the heart through the conscience of man. The will to save was in it all. Love for each and all of the sons of man, in their uniform defeat and universal unworthiness, carried the heart of Christ, the will of God in Him, through all the agony and darkness. "He loved me and gave Himself up for me" became henceforth the fact for all men.

We have deliberately avoided Scriptural language and the usual technical terms in these paragraphs, not because they are false or inadequate, but in order if possible to bring out this one fact, that on the Cross

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God did actually assume new personal relations with the fact of sin in the race of man. There was no formality. He was not bowing to the authority of a power above Himself. He was not defending Himself against the criticism of angels or of men for the offer of pardon. He was making it possible to grant forgiveness by entering personally into relations with the moral history of man which are righteous and holy, and by doing so from the motive of an eternal love and for the purposes of a free and pure and cleansing mercy. But when so much has been seen it becomes quite clear that all the varied modes of New Testament illustration and description of the atoning act are justified. He did suffer, "the righteous for the unrighteous, that He might bring us to God" (1 Pet. iii. 18). His blood was shed for the remission of sins (Heb. ix. 14-22), and God set Him forth in His blood as the object of our trust (Rom. iii. 25). He did bear our sins in His own body on the tree, and by His stripes we are healed. God did in Him, as an offering for sin, condemn sin; and He did it in the flesh, under the conditions of a human experience where hitherto sin had reigned supreme, rebuked by the law but triumphant through the flesh, carried on and confirmed by the mere momentum of human habit and organised custom (Rom. viii. 3). Until these things were done forgiveness could have no meaning but a bad one, and the offer of it no attraction for the conscience of man. But a pardon offered by God in his new relations with the moral universe, based on the righteousness He has

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made real in time, on the sin He has personally endured, on the holy love from which His wondrous deed has come, is a boon so pure and high and blessed that it must break the proud self-will and release the stifled yearnings of the soul of man for life in God.

2. *The Resurrection.*—The second stage in the work of salvation was the Resurrection of Christ. He was “raised again for our justification” (Rom. iv. 25). It goes without saying that, so far as the records and all the human probabilities go, the Crucifixion would have utterly destroyed the faith of the disciples. It was His revelation as the Risen Christ which established His Messiahship, defined and disclosed His eternal Sonship (Rom. i. 4), and awoke that characteristic Christian faith which has continued from that day to this. It is right, of course, to emphasise the fact that if death is a great fact in relation not only to man’s physical but also to his moral experience, then the Sinless One could not be permanently held in its grasp. But it is also of vital importance to grasp the idea that through the process of resurrection Jesus completed the ideal of a human life. The Perfect Man stood realised and revealed in all the qualities of perfection, physical and natural, as well as moral and spiritual. For the universe is one, and man’s experience must ultimately be all of a piece. The physical is no mere fleeting incident in his relations. It is as real and as essential as any other conditions of his active life. It too is part of the moral order of God which we call the universe, and has part



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and lot in the final outcome of all things (Rom. viii. ; Col. i.). That is for ever made clear and sure and, beyond all telling, a glad and glorious fact, in the resurrection of Christ from the dead. He has won and revealed the eternal destiny of human nature, and in Him, again, risen from the dead, God stands in relations to His created universe which are fundamentally new and which enable His rational creatures to enter into new relations with Him, apprehending their destiny and working their conscious will into His grand scheme of things.

3. *The Gift of the Holy Spirit.*—The third and final element in this method of salvation is known as the giving or sending of the Holy Spirit. Historically, as we learn from the Acts of the Apostles (chaps. i. and ii.), the consciousness of the disciples was not fully developed into its Christian form, even after the revelation to them of their Risen Lord. A great gladness was indeed thrilling their hearts, but there was a pause of expectancy. Something was still lacking, and they but dimly realised it. With Pentecost the climax was fully attained. That overwhelming experience became to them the permanent assurance that God Himself, in His Spirit, had verily united Himself with them as a community and as individual souls. No longer were they as forlorn spirits seeking rest and finding none ; no longer as children in a darkened house feeling about, and in vain, for the reality and presence of God. In their consciousness the human spirit and the Divine were



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made one in the daylight of pure personal relations. That fact is, as we have already seen, reflected throughout the writings of the New Testament. Not in esoteric terms is it described, nor is it reserved for a few and rare souls whose leisure or opportunities might make laboured and technical disciplines possible. This supreme gift, the pouring of the Spirit of God into the human heart, is offered to all men through repentance and faith. Busy men continuing their daily toil, plain and untutored women whose hearts are moved by the story of Jesus and the vision of the divine grace, may all know the fulness of the Christian salvation and receive into humble, penitent, and trusting hearts the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, the realised ineffable union with God.

A final word should be said on one matter of practical importance, both for individual faith and the preaching of the gospel. That gospel should never be represented as an abstract scheme, as a plan worked out to completion apart from human hearts, and then at last as a completed whole thrust upon human attention. Christ wrought out His salvation from step to step upon actual living men and women. His earliest influences as the Saviour of the world, when He began to manifest His quality and Person, were exerted upon a group of people with whom and upon whom the whole force of His whole work was brought to bear. Stage by stage He carried them with Him, so that His salvation never for a moment, as it were, hung fire, but at each moment of its gradual

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achievement and its unfolding took effect upon that little community and each member of it. It was an organic process, a living, effectual act of God upon the human consciousness throughout the necessary stages by which it was wrought to its completion. God did then and there create for Himself, and enter into new personal or ethical relations with men, in such a way that when all was done a community had been formed in which the divine life was actually present. This community knew itself to be organically united with God through Jesus Christ, its living, actual, controlling Head. There was no salvation wrought out as an abstract plan. A saved community, the Church of Christ was created, henceforth to be in the world as at once the sphere within which the power of God is effective and the organ by which that power shall transform the whole world.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE PRINCIPLE OF FAITH

**A**MONG the many distinctive features of the Christian message to the world, we must place its supreme emphasis upon the principle of faith. There was always in the world, as we shall see, a certain amount of faith, enough to keep some kind of gods in view, enough to hold society together on its various levels of civilisation. But nowhere in the history of religion or of philosophic thought before Christ do we find that the real meaning and scope of faith had been discovered. For instance, in the Old Testament we have a certain emphasis upon the demand that the people shall believe the messages of the prophets and shall put their trust in the protecting power of Jehovah. But nowhere save in a passing phrase, on which afterwards the Apostle Paul eagerly seized (Hab. ii. 4; cf. Rom. i. 17; Gal. iii. 11), do we find that this act of faith in Jehovah or faithfulness to Him is selected from the other elements of their religious consciousness and set on the throne of supremacy. The religious life of Israel was still under the power of ceremonies and rites, of the effort to deserve the approval of God by

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meritorious sacrifices and legal obedience. Or, again, in the philosophy of Greece, while we find that justice, courage, temperance, and other virtues are emphasised, none but an incidental reference can be found to that mutual trust on which all solid cities are founded. But in the New Testament, and throughout the history of Christianity, faith comes to the front. It is discovered to be the fundamental act by which man stands related to God, the organ of the soul by which it lays hold of the treasures of life offered in Christ.

### I. THE TEACHING OF JESUS ABOUT FAITH

It was, of course, in the ministry of Jesus, and in His full influence on the relations of His disciples to God, that this principle first came to light and the Christian faith was born. Jesus Himself nowhere expounds the nature and working of faith. He does not formally compare it with other methods of religious action, nor discuss it as His Apostles and the theologians of His Church had to do in later times. He had something far more vital and fundamental than that to accomplish. It was His work to create the new relations between man and God, and to produce that faith in which alone those relations could be realised and made henceforth the groundwork of the history of our race. To be brief, we must confine our summary of the matter to four points :

1. *Trust in Himself*.—The primary and essential



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thing to secure was the trust of His disciples in Himself. This at first was probably in their minds, admiration and confidence rendered to a great teacher—a prophet sent from God. Then it became a gradually deepening appreciation of His moral quality in its strange and baffling and humbling perfection. Then it became awe, and at times even fear, at His miraculous powers, His superhuman dealing with disease and other facts of nature (Luke v. 8). Then it became the consciousness that He was conveying to others a new knowledge of God, a new outlook upon the world, that He was the Messiah, the Saviour of the people (Matt. xvi. 16; John vi. 68). They saw in Him one whose own unbroken harmony with God was the only hope they could imagine for their own elevation somehow, some day, into that harmony, with its peace, purity, energy, and joy. Thus they were almost insensibly, yet not without intense discussion and wonderment, led into a habitual faith in Him which was the deepest and strongest fact in their conscious lives.

2. *Trust in God.*—All through His work among them Jesus was continually leading His disciples, as we saw in the second chapter, to a personal faith in God. “Have faith in God,” He explicitly said to those men who all their lives had thought they believed in Jehovah. His teaching about the Fatherhood of God was intended to evoke this act of trust in His power and love. They must trust in Him for the pardon of their sins (Matt. vi. 18), for the good things we have need of in raiment

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and food (ver. 30). Wherever He went He laid an entirely new emphasis on this attitude. He rebuked the disciples repeatedly for lack of faith ; at Nazareth He could not do His mighty works because of unbelief ; He witnessed the unexpected faith of the centurion ; He declared that faith, as a grain of mustard seed, could remove mountains of difficulty from human lives. Without defining or discussing it in any formal way, He fixed attention upon it as the deepest law of their relationship with God and with Himself (John xiv. 1).

3. *Ignoring other Methods.*—Besides all this we must remember the significance of the neglect which Jesus showed towards the traditional modes of approach to God. He appears to have ignored the ceremonies of the temple, and, as we saw in an earlier chapter (Chap. V.), He turned attention away from the verbal precision of legalism to the free action of an enlightened conscience. He did demand implicit and complete obedience to the commandments of God, but it must flow from this inner life of faith and love, and a conscience at rest. When He described the return of the prodigal son, when He forgave the sins of the paralytic and the sinful woman, He revealed the power which their faith exercised even over God.

4. *His Victory and their Faith.*—At last, when He had seemed to establish and perfect the faith of His disciples in God and in Himself, He went on to death, and beheld with grief but not surprise the perturbation into which His apparently dismal fate must throw

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the minds and the unripe confidence of His followers. Then came the power of His Resurrection, then the blessing of His indwelling Spirit. Those Jews found themselves in a new world, "begotten again," as one of them said, "unto a living hope." But in that new world what was the substance of their life, the solid ground beneath their feet? All their accustomed means of confidence had been swept entirely away. Not sacrificial rites, not priestly ablutions, not painful and perfect observance of formal enactments, not the temple nor the altar, not the synagogue any more than the mountains and the stars, had wrought this amazing change upon their souls. When they looked they found in themselves but one fact, one act, on which heaven seemed to rest: it was their confidence, their faith in the Risen Saviour and in God through Him. Nothing in the moral universe bound them to God but that. Hence, when their fellow-citizens challenged them to explain this wonder that had come to them, Peter and his fellow-witnesses found it impossible to give to them any other secret than this, that they should repent and believe. Faith had now begun openly, explicitly, and in glorious solitude of majesty to rule the world.

## II. THE TEACHING OF PAUL ABOUT FAITH

In spite of these facts, it was not the earliest group of disciples, Peter and James (the Lord's brother), and

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the rest who first measured the full range of this mighty revolution in the religious history of man. They knew that they were saved by faith in Jesus the Messiah and in God who had raised Him from the dead, but they continued to haunt the temple as if it were still somehow the earthly centre of their new fellowship. It required the experience of another set of men to discover the full power and reach of the new religion, and to help the primary apostles to see it too. Such men were Stephen (Acts vii.), Paul, the unknown author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, and others, who all seem to have been born and brought up beyond Palestine and to have breathed the air of non-Jewish culture. It was they who disentangled from its fatal association with the past religious principles of Judaism, the real and pure gospel of grace and of faith. We must devote a little space to the work of Paul and of that unknown author on this vital matter to make it clear.

1. *The Revelation of Christ to him.*—Saul of Tarsus before his conversion had given the marvellous energy of his religious genius to the fulfilment of the Jewish law as the only way of righteousness and the only way to peace with God. His own reminiscent words in Philippians iii. and Romans vii. seem to indicate that this effort was felt by himself to be a failure. The law had condemned him in his own conscience even when he was found blameless by men. But his convictions were unbroken and his zeal unbounded. He undertook a fierce and elaborate persecution of the Church if haply



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he might please God by the destruction of those despicable worshippers of the crucified One, those enemies of law and temple (Acts vi. 13, 14). Through all, even of these zealous labours, no voice spoke peace to his heart, and the righteousness of God remained as far beyond his reach as heaven itself. But when that voice broke the stillness of the skies, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest," the dark and turbulent night of his spirit ended suddenly. Saul, the blasphemer and persecutor, received the inexplicable mercy of the Risen Christ, the Son of God. With that mercy the very righteousness of God descended upon him. He knew this because he found himself in the fellowship of the Holy One. Who can measure the amazement of that great heart and the change wrought upon that imperial intellect! At one stroke he saw all the laborious machinery of the law swept aside. The righteous God had come to him by the royal road of love.

2. *His Discovery of Faith.*—But what in his human nature corresponded to that movement of the Divine will? It was not righteousness, because mercy had overtaken him on the road of rebellion, of ungodly hate, of blasphemy and murder. And now as he sat there blind and silent in the house of Judas in Damascus, or later as he spent his three great years of brooding solitude "in Arabia," what did he find in himself, as his act, responsive to the deed of God which transformed His whole life? He found only one thing, and its name was Faith. "I now live in the flesh in faith, the faith

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which is in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me ” (Gal. ii. 20). “ By grace ” had he “ been saved through faith ” (Eph. ii. 8). He gave up completely all other efforts and grounds of confidence, which had never yielded true confidence, before God ; he flung them aside as refuse, and found “ the righteousness which is from God by faith ” (Phil. iii. 9). Through that great heart of Paul, in this discovery of a new world-order, a new way of God with man, Christ had found at last His entrance to the heart of the world, and the new era of man’s spiritual being was opened, to the wonder of angels and joy on the throne of the universe. The absolute and final and universal religion had been fully established in the grasp of a human mind, and the gospel could now be proclaimed to the whole creation. The supreme missionary enterprise had begun its true history.

3. *His Battle for the New Truth.*—We must remember that nothing happens in our world without struggle. There is strain and stress among the stars, out of which their harmony is sung. There is clash and competition in the quiet of the meadow and forest glades, and rushing beneath the most placid summer sea. Even among the early group of Apostles the gospel of faith did not win its way without heart-burning and controversy. We have seen how deep was the amazement of the original Church at Jerusalem when it was found that even Gentiles received the gifts of the Spirit of God. The leaders acknowledged the unexpected wonder as the

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act of God, and a compact of peace was made between the two sections which temperament, or habit wrought by training, rather than difference of conviction, tended to form among them. But not all would follow such noble-hearted leaders in the way of peace. Some remained bitterly hostile to the policy of receiving Gentiles uncircumcised into the Church, and they were so vigorous and relentless that even Peter was made hesitant and inconsistent by their force of will (Gal. ii. 11 ff.). These men, whose names and relation to the Church remain in obscure mystery, quickly found that Paul was the real leader and most powerful Apostle, and they invaded many of his fields of labour to undo his work. To their deadly hatred of his gospel and active antagonism we owe the Apostle's great letter to the Galatians and passages in other letters, especially that sent to the Romans, which deal with the new and creative principle of faith. He has three chief lines of argument :

(1) *His First Defence : Experience.*—First, he boldly and firmly takes his stand on the ground of experience. He can take his own case, as of one who with utmost devotion and sincerity had tried the method of the law, which those enemies were urging upon his converts. None of them had put more confidence in it or pursued its principles with greater success (Phil. iii. 3-6 ; Rom. vii. 7-25 ; Gal. i. 13, 14). Yet it had utterly failed ; and it had fallen away from him into a dead past when the Risen Christ was revealed to Him by the act of

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God. In that hour he was put into new relations with God without reference of any kind to his standing as a circumcised Hebrew, or a trained and convinced Pharisee, or a virtuous man, or a religious zealot. These things had exercised no influence upon his new life of conscious union with God. He could find no act of his which had any place or relevance in this new situation except his act of faith. But he could also appeal to the case of Peter himself, who knew, and none better, that he had been justified not "by the works of the law, but through faith in Jesus Christ" (Gal. ii. 16). Further, he could appeal to the fact that the Galatians themselves, who were being so easily deluded by "a different gospel," had themselves "received the Spirit" when he first preached Jesus Christ to them, and that so vividly that His cross seemed to stand before their eyes, and they believed on Him (Gal. iii. 1, 2). And still further, when he writes to the Romans he can assure them that he does not depend on isolated or purely personal phenomena for the substance of his gospel. He has been preaching now for many years, among many races, and it stands proved by an experience too wide, too varied, too real, too glorious and godlike to admit of doubt, that the power of God comes upon "every one that believeth," whatever his race or past earthly condition.

(2) *His Second Defence: Abraham.*—There is one line of historical argument which Paul felt to be so powerful that he elaborated it both to the Romans



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(iv. 1-25) and the Galatians (iii. 5-29). He appeals to the case of Abraham, the father of the Hebrew race, of whom it is said (Gen. xv. 6) that he "believed God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness." It is not said that Abraham won his righteousness by his own labours, nor that he received the payment of a debt owing from the Almighty to his merits. Nor again could it be said that the righteousness of Abraham their father arose from his perfect observance of that law on whose fulfilment these Jews rested all their hopes ; for the law came in long after his day and has no bearing at all upon his religious experience. Even the rite of circumcision which he did observe was instituted after his righteousness before God had already been established, and after the great promise, in which all their Jewish hope had its ultimate historical root, had been solemnly made by God. It was clear then that their own father Abraham entered into righteousness centuries before the law was given, and as an uncircumcised man ; and the Scripture makes it abundantly clear that the sole condition of his right standing with God was this principle of faith, for whose glory he, Paul, was contending against these Judaising Christians.

(3) *His Third Defence : the Nature of Grace.*—This triumphant historical appeal was not felt by Paul to be the full statement of his case. He also deals with the inner meaning of the various principles under discussion. There are two fundamental methods of the religious life which in this controversy are at war with one another ;

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the one is the righteousness which is demanded by "the law," the other is the righteousness which is conferred by the grace of God. He proves that the latter is no dream, no theory of what might be. It is an established fact, a way of dealing with man which God has now put into full operation in Christ Jesus. There are human beings who now consciously possess righteousness. They have been justified, that is forgiven for a sinful past and taken into a living fellowship with Himself, by the supreme and all-holy One. The number of these is multiplying continually wherever the gospel is proclaimed. No barriers of race prejudice, of dark iniquity, of barbarism or ignorance have proved insuperable. On the other hand, the whole history of legalism cannot produce one conscience to which it has given the righteousness and peace of God. Its trophies are tortured consciences, defeated wills, and broken hopes. The reason for this great difference lies here, that by fulfilment of the law a man endeavours to merit eternal life, to make the Almighty his debtor, while by acceptance of grace a man assumes his true place in the moral universe as one who is conscious that he does not deserve the boon of life eternal, but as one to whom it has been granted by the free and immeasurable and inexplicable mercy of God Himself. If the latter deals with man as man, and not with one man as a Jew and another man as a Gentile, then the only human act which can be relevant and reasonable and effectual in this situation is the act of faith. When the vision of the divine grace, that love

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which is clothed with pity, that holiness which shines through the tempering atmosphere of mercy, breaks upon a man's soul, his effort to "work" is paralysed, merit becomes as distasteful as it is impossible, and he casts himself in the great deed of self-abandonment upon a Saviour, a Father, a God whom he trusts wholly and for ever.

### III. THE TEACHING OF THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS.

While it was the Apostle Paul upon whom the great task was laid of revealing to all men this vital view of faith, and thus establishing before all eyes the universal character of the Christian religion, it was given to another New Testament writer to celebrate the praise of faith in another way. The eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews is a kind of Epic of Faith. Its very style assumes a swing, a rhythm, a majesty which only great moments in the history of human thought can clothe themselves withal.

1. *The Perplexity of Hebrew Christians.*—The letter was apparently addressed to Hebrew Christians, who were passing through a great trial. Outward afflictions were upon them, but their chief trouble was inward. They seem to have come to that natural period of personal history when, the first fervours of faith, the first joys of the Spirit having been experienced, they faced the commonplace facts of their social environment. The hunger for their old habits came back. They wondered

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whether a real and solid religion could exist without temple and sacrifices, without priests and stately ceremonies. They asked themselves whether really it was intended by God that those glorious elements of the life of Israel should thus vanish and leave their world so bare and colourless as it seemed to their eyes. In earlier chapters the author has gone over the great Christian argument with unsurpassed skill of exposition, with calm dignity and tender sympathy. But when he has proved that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, surpasses all the highest names of the Old Testament revelation, angels, Moses, Joshua ; when he has shown the meaning and glory of the High Priesthood of Christ, and that before its grandeur and power all other earthly priest-hoods must pass away ; when he has proved that the temple sacrifices were but poor and ineffective symbols of the only true and potent sacrifice which Jesus made in His own blood, and which He presents in heaven for all men for ever, he seems to have proved too much. "He not only leaves us," his first readers might well say, "with this 'faith' as our only earthly security against the danger of perdition (Heb. x. 39),—and it does seem so thin—but he seems to abolish the whole value and virtue of the ancient Scriptures. If prophet and priest, temple and sacrifice, existed only until Christ came, it looks as if Old Testament history was all husk and no kernel, all symbol and no substance." It is to this feeling, or something like it, that the great argument of chapter xi. to chapter xii. 2 is addressed.



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2. *The Definition of Faith.*—The first of its three stages is very brief, but of vital importance, and consists of the famous definition of faith: "Faith is assurance of (or the giving substance to) things hoped for, a conviction (or test) of things not seen." Whatever may be the best English terms for the first word of each of the defining clauses, the meaning of the whole is clear. Faith is our attitude towards the future and the invisible. When we act in relation to anything which is beyond the immediate moment, or beyond our immediate sense perceptions, we then act by faith.

3. *The Abiding Substance of the Old Testament.*—This most sound and helpful definition of faith is then applied to the Old Testament with a most astonishing result. It results that the real substance of the ancient story, the vital and essential element of the entire religion of the Hebrews on its human side, was faith. (1) The very foundation of all religion is the belief in God as the Creator of the universe (xi. 3), and the life of religion consists in the belief that God is in active relations with men (xi. 6). (2) But the history of Old Testament enthusiasm and heroism is simply the revelation of the glorious nature and commanding power and contagious joy of faith. All these men and women achieved their greatness because they were great in faith: whether it was Abraham gazing into the future, or Moses into the invisible; whether it was Joseph giving commandment concerning his bones, or Rahab sheltering the spies of Jehovah, they acted not in relation to the visible and

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immediate facts before them, but on the conviction that God holds sway over the days that are to come, and rules the things we see from a throne to which these outer eyes are blind. The thrilling recital of the familiar names of a few, and the heaped-up *tumulus* of the sufferings and the wrongs and the tragic deaths of innumerable unnamed heroes of faith, combine to make the reader feel that here in the story of the spirit of man we have the substance of history. Not the stones of the eternal city, nor the faint echo of her ancient language and customs to-day in her streets, are Rome for us; but the patriotism and enterprise, the courage and statesmanship, of her ancient citizens. In them we touch the reality that was Rome. So this writer makes his fellow Hebrews feel as they look back upon the story of Jerusalem, of Israel, of ritual and temple. Not these vanished glories, but the faith of their fathers in God bound one generation to another in a life of meaning, and became their great legacy to all the ages of mankind.

4. *The Supreme Faith*.—The third portion of the argument is brief, but conclusive. The Old Testament heroes believed in the promise of God, died for it, died without seeing it fulfilled. This was not faithlessness towards them on the part of God, for they shall most certainly be made perfect; but it was grace to us. Not one of them shall lose his place in the final glory, but we of the Christian era shall be included. For our faith in God, if we are worthy to be called the heirs of their faith, looks upward and onward to Jesus, who is “the author and perfecter of

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faith." His great work, nay, He the worker, must be the object of a trust which all the host of faithful souls in the past will watch, as an encompassing cloud of sympathy, and which Jesus Himself will reward from the very throne of God. }

### IV. GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS.

We must now try, though very swiftly, to survey this matter, this deep principle of faith, that we may see how and why it has taken this pre-eminence in the final religion, and what may be its relation to the missionary quality and power of the gospel.

1. *The Psychology of Faith.*—We must begin by asking what Faith is, as one of the functions of human nature. For here there is much misunderstanding. One of the most common errors is to speak as if it were a distinctive organ of the soul, and one which may or may not be created by the Spirit of God in individual cases. Huxley said it was not included in his structure. David Hume, with one of his most terrible sneers, suggested that it was a miracle wrought in a man to enable him to accept the miracles of the Bible. We have already seen that faith is described best as a definite attitude assumed towards things that are invisible and future. In this attitude the self is active in all its fundamental powers of mind and heart and will. Each of these elements of consciousness is necessary to the production of faith. The mind must apprehend

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the reality and place of the object ; the heart, with all that this somewhat popular term includes, must feel and appreciate its meaning and value for self ; the will or power of action must be positively exerted to relate the self with the object so apprehended and so appreciated. If I see a certain object and it takes its place in my universe, if I feel its worth or value, if I then proceed to act upon its reality and its meaning, I have acted in faith. Each of the three elements must be present in some degree if my faith is to be rational and complete. But if the three are included in my conduct nothing else is needed to make the act deserve the name of an act of faith.

Of course, we must recognise that each of these elements of consciousness has richly varied forms, and the meaning of faith itself must vary accordingly. To apprehend the reality and uses of a bridge before my eyes, or an island of spices in the orient, or a human friend, or a great truth, is the work of reason, and yet how differently she operates in these directions. The very feelings of the heart are not the same when we contemplate the value, the relation to our interests, of these different objects. Our moral sense, our æsthetic sympathy, colour that response of our inner nature out of which action or conduct springs. We all recognise objects named as possessing different degrees of importance for our separate lives. What may be all important for one man is a "dead hypothesis," as Professor James has it, for another man. So again,



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the movement of the will, the form of action, is not the same in these different cases. My conduct in using the bridge for the thousandth time, or buying spices for the first time, or leaning on the judgment of my friend in a great personal crisis, or regulating life upon an ascertained truth in morals or economics, flows from my self-determination, and turns my preceding apprehension and appreciation of the facts into a living faith; but in each case the decision seems different from every other. Nevertheless these are all phases in that life of faith which is our whole and sole life upon earth.

2. *The Place of Faith in General Experience.*—This, then, is one of the remarkable and happy effects of the proclamation of the law of faith in the New Testament. It has helped to reveal to us the essential unity and the deeply spiritual nature of the whole of man's practical life. Some minds still tend to retain the word "faith" wholly for religious uses. They practically restrict it to the relations of man with God. We have seen that this must be viewed as psychologically an inaccurate account of the nature of faith. It can also be described as a distinct detriment to our view of the meaning of man's general experience, and of its relation to that which is specially known as his religious life. For if our analysis is correct and relevant, it follows that faith is the life-blood of our whole social experience. It is the inner bond connecting interests and forms of conduct so diverse as art, science, patriotism, industry, love, and

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religion. In each of these a man relates himself with some object, whose reality and value he apprehends, and towards which he is moved by the deepest impulse of his nature to act. The man of art, for whom the ideal of the beautiful, or the man of science, for whom truth is almost an essential of existence, is not dealing with a mere figment of the imagination. Powerless as his reason may be to explain its ultimate nature and seat of reality, he apprehends it as a most real as well as a most glorious object of desire.

The man who is absorbed in the claims of patriotism may well be puzzled to set forth in precise detail a logical defence of his passion and sacrifice. His country, what is it? What makes it infinitely more precious to him than all other countries put together? There are fair valleys and grand mountains across the border. There, too, are human homes with all the sweet charm of family love and the deep mystery of family grief. There, too, are government, industry, and agriculture, and many noble hearts serve the cause of that other land as devotedly and purely as this man serves his. Who shall attempt to explore the fountainheads of patriotism? They lie far up in the regions where all our ideals spring. It is mere cloudland if we attempt to guide ourselves in it by our logical faculty. Our thinking becomes misty and unrelated to the valleys and fields of life. But from that region of reason and the spirit of man all the streams run down which become his practical ideas, his purest and deepest passions, his mighty motives

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and blood red devotions of soul. All which just means that in the higher levels man walks and runs, loves and toils, by faith. Some object is before his soul's vision whose outlines mingle with the skies. It has power over his affection, his conscience, his yearning for the true, the beautiful, the good, and it rouses him to lifelong and most costly tasks. It is the call of the infinite, to which the answer of man can never be aught but the rejection or the acceptance of the law of faith.

To put the matter in another way, it may be said that all society is founded on faith. This becomes clearer as civilization becomes more complex, and the mutual interactions of men more intricate, more potent in their influence. Men depend on one another for kinds of conduct which cannot be regulated by law or controlled by courts of justice. Standards of honour are erected by common consent which become powerful over the selfishness and greed and meanness of individual members of society. These often exercise a sway far beyond that of formal legislation. But it is evident that their fulfilment is secured by faith. In all business affairs men have to lean on one another for promptitude and honesty. In the deeper relations of family and friendship faith is the very soul of reality. Thus we can have no true love, no frank intercourse, no purity of motive, and no sincere sacrifice except as we are bound together by this golden chain of personal trust. The very fact that we realise this more openly and intelligently than was possible in past ages is proof that the

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social order is becoming more truly ethical, that its most sacred and solid boons are known and confessed to be the fruit of that free movement of conscience and heart which is the very atmosphere of the great principle of faith.

3. *Faith in the Religious History of Man.*—The significance of faith was not known, and its deliberate cultivation was not possible, until the Christian religion had begun to do its sublime work upon human nature. But when we ponder its place and power in relation to the gospel, we begin to realise that it has very deep connections with the deepest foundation of our being. All who believe in the living God hold that the universe depends wholly upon His will and flows from His purpose. It derives its being and meaning from Him,—the dead things of the inorganic universe no less than the thrilling spirits before His throne. This dependence is, of course, unconscious among all forms of existence that are unconscious and unrational. It may be that it begins to reveal itself to consciousness, blindly and in dull fashion, when we reach animals that are capable of fear, and flee to the shelter of any object that seems to promise deliverance from danger. But in man it breaks out into the daylight of a rational will. He can grasp this universal fact of creaturely dependence on God, and make it the guide of conduct and the hope of his heart. It follows that all religions do found themselves even unwittingly upon faith. However crude and superstitious they seem to us, they express for their devotees this sense of depend-



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ence for definite and supreme blessings upon that Power which is over all.

This is one of the facts upon which the wise missionary is careful to seize as a guide to him in his delivery of the Christian message. Perhaps it may not be rash to say that here many minds find a more solid and more Christian basis for cherishing what Tennyson called "the larger hope," than in speculations about future probation and such uncertain matters. For the faith of the nations is a real thing; and if corruption has invaded their religions, and gross darkness their social practices, we must yet recognise that in none has faith been utterly destroyed. Even among degraded savage tribes the missionary is very apt to find some circle of men whose minds revolt at the worst forms of shame, in whose hearts there is faith in a better order, and who have a dim feeling that the Power over all powers is on the side of that higher ideal. If we are permitted to see faith in Rahab, how much more in the multitudes of men and women of nobler mind and purer life than she, who have kept the lamp of trust burning in the darkest days of human history. Even the smoking flax He shall not quench.

It is evident that in the times of his ignorance man did not know the nature and range of his needs, and therefore could not exercise the full powers of his faith in God. Even when he knew that he depended on God for life and breath and all things earthly, he did not know that God must supply all the demands of his

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moral nature and situation, nor, indeed, what those demands were. When he began to realise this under the spur of the law and the lash of prophetic accusations, he still had to learn that God both can and will deal with his sin, not to destroy but to deliver him from its disgrace and its disaster. The great and final revelation came when God appeared as the forgiver and remover of sin, as the Father seeking fellowship with his sons far-wandered and forespent. The supreme act of faith, the very crown and glory of that marvellous principle of all personal life, is, to depend on God for His mercy towards a sinful and penitent soul. That, apart from Christ and His Cross, is the one incredible thing which no other religion had discovered, nor its founders promised, before Him. But, once disclosed in the power of the Saviour, once grasped, expounded, and defended by His Apostles, it took its place as the climax of the religious development of man, as the one, universal, and indispensable law which must henceforth govern the relations of man and God, and saturate all human experience with its pure and heavenly nature. God is the God of mercy, and man can have no duty, no privilege, no object of rational action, no motive of purity, till he meets that mercy with trust. This is the essence and fountain of all further history for the individual and the race.

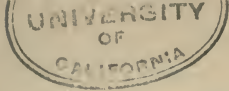
4. *Faith and Creeds.*—We have seen that the act of faith implies always a movement of the mind. An object must be apprehended by me as a reality, and it must be set there in its own place in my universe, before

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I can feel its value and deal with it. That is to say, there is an intellectual element in faith. Wheresoever it is created our reason is at work there, building or rebuilding our total view of things. It is from this intellectual necessity of our life that all systematic thought has grown, all philosophies, all doctrines, all creeds, all theologies. They are the inevitable, healthful, and constant offspring of faith. The word "creed" is used to cover a great variety of forms under which the effort of Christian leaders to summarise Christian truth has worked. Originally it means just "I believe" (Latin, *credo*), and the first creed was simply an expression of personal trust with a statement of the object on which the trust was directed (see Apostles' Creed). But the widening life and influence of the Church, and the progressive efforts made to set forth the whole body of Christian truth in a formal and systematic manner, led to the construction of creeds and confessions from which the personal act was gradually eliminated and in which we find only an impersonal statement of objective truth. This was a natural and even necessary outcome of the whole facts.

To prevent the Church from thinking, which those would do who deny doctrine and theology and sneer generally at the creeds, would be to crush that rational element of faith which we have seen to be vital. Indeed, already, where we have neglect of doctrine and disparagement of the study of Christian truth in a systematic manner, we have as a result, merely sentimental forms





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of enthusiasm which lose their grip on the ordered life of man, and even superstition of the grossest kinds, with a blind readiness for the acceptance of fad religions, both nebulous and futile.

On the other hand, it must be observed that faith cannot be forced. It cannot possibly live as real faith except in the atmosphere of freedom. The authority of the creeds and of the Church must be used solely as a moral authority, appealing to the will through the conscience of each man, with his affections and the movements of his mind. To make mere belief a law which men can administer, to define doctrines of the Christian faith as if they were enactments enforceable at a human judgment bar, is not to preserve or nourish but to dishonour and desolate the power of a living faith. When force has been used in support of creeds, the offspring has not been the glorious and radiant consciousness of the sons of God, the dignity of conscious choice, the energy of personal decision, but a society of dull worldlings interspersed with faces of terror. Faith must rear her creeds if she would be reasonable, but faith must be free from an attempted physical enforcement if she would live at all.

5. *Faith and Mysticism.*—It has been objected to this whole view of faith that it seems to ignore what is called the mystical element, which we find so powerful in the language of the Apostle Paul. But this objection is surely due to a misunderstanding of the seat of mysticism in Pauline thought. As we have



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seen in another connection, the mystic element in religion arises from the sense of direct contact between the individual soul and eternal realities. That contact is said to be realised in various ways, but in the Christian gospel it is given in and through the apprehension that the Risen Christ, and God through Him, is presented to us as, so to speak, an object, a Person to be dealt with in conscience and heart. When that is intensely realised, the soul is brought consciously and powerfully under the influence of facts, all of which run up, as it were, in living connections between itself and the infinitude of God. It is here, in the opening out before our eyes of the heart of mercy, surely the most mystical fact in the universe; here in the intense reality of the divine righteousness and the divine love poured out upon the earth through the breaking of the heart of Jesus on the Cross; here in the sense of sin which the quickening presence of God awakes, and which refuses to count itself limited or measurable or explainable; here in the sound of that home-call of the soul when it realises its affinity with God, and is moved to its depths as by the voice of its own inmost being crying for life, it is here that true Christian mysticism has its healthy life. And here is the birthplace and nurture of faith.

5. *The Principle of Faith as universal.*—We must conclude with another glance at the fact that the religion which has made the act of faith the fundamental mode of man's life towards God has there one more witness to its finality and its universality. For no simpler and

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no deeper connection can ever be established in a world of sin between guilty men and a loving but merciful God than lies in this attitude which we call trust. It is an act or attitude so centrally founded in human nature that all men of all races, and all forms and degrees of intelligence and civilisation, are capable of it. None who can have the sense of sin or conceive of God, none whose eyes can be lifted beyond the horizons of this life, none whose hearts can be reached by the notes of love, are beyond the range of this message. "It is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth."

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE VITAL MEANING OF THE CHURCH AND THE BIBLE

WE have seen that the Christian religion never existed as a mere abstract plan of salvation or programme of conduct. When the redemption of man and the revelation of God through Christ were accomplished facts, they had already taken their place in human experience. They had even then become the life of a community, the basis of its distinctive existence, and the driving power of its history. Christianity was not like a philosophy, a kind of formless spirit which may spread like an atmosphere through a people's life and yet fail to produce a new organism of its own. Nor was it a merely individualistic interest. Although it did in a sense discover the human individual as no religion and no philosophy had ever seen him, in the infinite meaning and value of each soul for God and for itself, it did not leave each man "burning upward to his point of bliss" in isolation. On the contrary, its individual believers were of infinite value for each other also, and they could only realise the full reality of their new life in social as well as in secret experience.

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The glory of a redeemed humanity in conscious union with God was brought into view after such a manner that each beheld the majesty of his brother Christian, and found it as impossible to ignore that brother as it was to ignore himself.

The general social nature of the human race appears in and rests on such fundamental facts as (a) the law of reproduction, (b) the necessity for co-operation alike in the nurture of children and in the communal conquest and uses of nature, and (c) the possibility of progress in the pursuit of moral and spiritual ideals, including the practice of religion, only through the co-operation of many individuals. Each and all of these vital elements of society were recognised and taken up, in changed forms, into the life of Christianity. From the first the teaching of Jesus gave prominence to the idea of the kingdom of God, which is a definitely social conception, and which by natural steps passed over into that of the living and witnessing Church. It is true that, to begin with, they were only a formless group of men and women, with only the rudiments of organisation, who composed the Christian community. But they speedily began to exercise the functions of a living organism. The principle of reproduction was recognised and put into operation as they began to bear witness in the very presence of utterly hostile groups of men to the nature, origin, and power of the life which bound them together. The principle of co-operation in development of character, in enrichment of thought



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and experience, was recognised as they met together and apart from the world for deeper instruction in Christian truth, and for partaking of the Sacraments. It was out of these modes of action, by that inchoate community which waited in Jerusalem until Pentecost, that the Christian Church and the Bible gradually took definite shape, and entered upon their permanent and ever-widening influence in the world. We must consider each of these in turn.

### I. THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

We have already seen that the Church of Christ is the name given to the community of believers in Him. They were not merely united by possessing the same convictions about God and man, the way of salvation and the hope of eternal life. Many temporary associations of men have been formed by interest in the same studies, or in the same artistic pursuits, or in the same theories of the meaning of life. But in such groups there is something lacking of which the Church has been conscious from the very beginning,—that is, its inward, living union with God in Christ, its inhabitation by the Spirit of life. It has never believed itself to be merely an earthly association of human beings, but a spiritual union of those who are united with Christ, or in other words an organism of which He is the life, a body of which He is the Head.

1. *The Outward Form.*—At Pentecost the Church

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seems to have been, as we have said, a formless mass, with only the rudiments of organisation. One distinction did exist between those who were called Apostles and all other believers in Jesus Christ, and a function of peculiar importance was recognised as belonging to the former class in the new economy. That function arose naturally and inevitably from the fact that they had been chosen by Jesus to form an inner circle of disciples, whom He taught and influenced more continuously and deeply than any others, and by the further fact that they were witnesses of His resurrection. They were by these circumstances constituted as the leaders of the new community.

For a time there seems to have been no idea of imposing any definite polity upon the Christians. Rather does organisation seem to have arisen, as it does wherever life is present, partly from the action of the environment and partly from the felt needs of the living thing itself. The appointment of seven men for a special work, which is described in Acts vi., is a clear illustration and proof of this process. Every step in the development of a polity in the Apostolic Church, so far as it can be traced, is of the same kind. The fundamental needs were such as teaching, evangelism, care and disbursement of money for the poor, oversight of the local community in each city where a church was formed. Modern historical scholarship has made it abundantly clear that these offices were variously conceived and named, and appointments to

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them were variously made in different countries. There was no uniformity, no observance of a fixed programme. Everywhere there was a keen appreciation of the practical demands of the place and the hour, and an inner sensitive and assured dependence upon the guidance of the Spirit of God. Hence it is that we have such difficulty in setting forth any general outward organisation of the Church, either in apostolic times or for several centuries afterwards ; and hence it is that all the leading forms of Church polity which obtain in the Christian world to-day are able to find some justification for themselves in the principles and practice of the New Testament Churches. Nowhere do these statements appear to be more fully confirmed than by the three Epistles, known as "Pastoral Epistles," to Timothy and Titus. There Paul deals in a special way with special groups of churches, and in describing the duty of the two younger men, whom he is sending on their unusual errands, discusses the basis and meaning of the offices with which they are to deal. But the discussion has almost nothing to do with mere matters of procedure or form. It is concerned only with the spiritual and moral meaning of the work to be done, and with the spiritual and moral equipment which they must possess who would undertake the work.

This is not the place for a discussion of controversial topics regarding the rival forms of Church polity. But two things may be said on which there will nowadays



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be a very wide agreement among leaders of different sections of the Church of Christ.

(1) In the first place, practically all sections do make provision for the three or four fundamental matters without which the Church can hope neither to be fully nourished in its own faith and power, nor to extend the blessings of its life to others. It must make due provision for missionary work or evangelism, for continuous instruction and teaching of its members, for pastoral oversight of its spiritual and temporal affairs and its works of charity and mercy, and for the due observance of its sacraments and other sacred ordinances. Failure or laxity in any of these matters always leads to loss of energy and influence.

(2) In the second place, because the Church is not a mere association of individuals for a partial and evanescent purpose, but rather a living organism, "the body of Christ," the true seat of its continuity must be sought in the continuous relation of all believers to its Lord and life, Jesus Christ. As a matter of fact, every body of Christian believers throughout the world to-day can trace its history back through a communal life, and through all the changes of the centuries, to the witness of the Apostles. If we keep our eye upon that indubitable statement, we shall better understand the meaning of all divergences in outward organisation, and of all changes in the doctrine concerning the Church which have inevitably accompanied those divergences. This does not imply that questions of Church government



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are not important. But it does mean that they must be studied in the light of their environment, as well through the influence of the whole circumstances which gave them birth as through the partial or controversial explanations given of them by their respective founders and followers.

These observations are of peculiar importance for those who carry the gospel into mission fields, and find themselves under the solemn and yet inspiring responsibility of guiding young Christian communities in building up the organised forms of Church life and work. Few intelligent persons believe that anywhere the ideal organisation is to be found either to-day or in any previous generation. Yet every intelligent leader of Church life must often dream of that form through which the Spirit of Christ would wield its finest and most potent influence upon the whole moral and spiritual life of man. Somewhere even to-day there must be communions which approach more nearly to that ideal, and some which are further off. It can only be through the utmost mutual charity, through deep and faithful search for the signs of His presence in the character and power of His disciples, through patient and loving intercourse between those whom birth and training as well as personal study and conviction have placed in different groups, that the paths will open which lead from various quarters of the ecclesiastical world to the centre where His throne is set, and from which He, with His royal patience and divine wisdom,

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most firmly rules and most forgivingly guides them all.

2. If we assume that the Church of Christ even in its broken parts and in its unworthiness, which all Christians continually and humbly confess, is the actual organism through which the Spirit of God is directing the history of man, something must be said of its place in the world.

(1) First, we must mark its inter-racial or universal nature. Recent historians have been emphasising the fact that the early Christians felt themselves very vividly to be a new race. They found themselves united in the circle of Christian believers with people of all kinds from all quarters of the known world. Barbarians, Scythians, bondmen, freemen, men and women, cultured philosophers and unlettered peasants, merchants and soldiers, they were united in a new kind of community by the mighty consciousness of a new life. That life was so real, so glorious, so rich in meaning and in joy that it tended powerfully to obliterate racial distinctions which otherwise seemed irreducible, and to remove social barriers to intimacy of trust and love and mutual service which previously no man dreamed of surmounting. Even the "middle wall of partition" between Jew and Gentile had been broken down by the power of Christ, and after that all rivers of human experience seemed to flow together.

(2) The Church felt itself to occupy through its whole membership a position which had been confined to a select class, namely, that of a priesthood. Amid

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all differences of interpretation which the various peoples and religions placed upon the power of their priests two things were held in common. The priests were supposed to have special access to the presence of God, or special influence among superhuman forces, and special authority to stand before the people in His name. This double function was transferred to the entire body of Christian believers. They all had an equal right to enter into the holy place of actual and personal communion with God ; and they had the solemn and inspiring burden of living among men as representatives of His will and spirit. This mystical view of the nature and meaning of the Church has never been wholly lost, although there have been times when it seemed to be submerged by a return to non-Christian views of priesthood. It has always had its place in the great acts of public worship, in the constant practice of intercessory prayer by all true believers, and in the sense of responsibility for the propagation of the gospel by private individuals as well as by those ordained to preach. It is always most clearly held when the Church has become openly engaged in missionary work, or where believers have found themselves surrounded by a hostile as well as a sinful and suffering world. It is felt, strange to say, with very great depth at opposite extremes of ecclesiastical organisation and practice. Those who habitually employ elaborate and symbolical forms of worship,—if they have, as their teachers and guides, earnest men who are filled with the zeal of the gospel, and are able to



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keep elaboration from crushing the imagination and symbolism from starving the sense of immediate contact with God,—do often cherish the priesthood of the whole Church, and carry on its intercessory task with singular devotion. On the other hand, those also who practise the simplest forms of worship, and meet together in humble and obscure places, often possess the most exalted and radiant convictions about their responsibility for the spread of the gospel ; and they too, alike in sacrificial lives, in constant prayer, and in true realisation of the presence of Christ in their midst, exercise a priesthood stripped of outward adorning, which has a dignity and beauty and power worthy of Him who sacrificed for all men on Calvary, and intercedes for all men at the throne of God.

Men differ as to what may be considered the most poetical thing in the world. One says it is an island ; another says it is a road leading the traveller through forest and field, over hill and valley, always alluring and always revealing ; another thinks it is a child in whose face the glory of another world yet shines, and whose eyes are full of wonder as they gaze on the confusing lights and shadows of this world. Perhaps the most thoroughly poetical fact in history is the Church of Christ. There the consciousness of the Divine and human mingles with the organised life of humanity. There we have in an intensified form the struggle of right with wrong, of mortal fear with immortal hope, of faith which lays hold of the very heart



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of God with guilt which shrinks from the name of the holy Judge, of pure love caught from the fire of divine mercy fighting with the fiercer passion of self-will. Over the whole course of its varied history during nineteen centuries the great warfare has been waged. The sordid and the spiritual, the earthly and the heavenly, the selfish and the sacrificial, are always at work in its membership, and most intensely in the hearts of its noblest leaders. Sometimes the one set of forces, sometimes the other, have seemed to reign supreme. From the first its mystic beauty was felt, and men searched for the most pure and holy symbols to describe it, such as "the body of Christ," "the Bride of the Heavenly Bridegroom," "the family of God," "the city," "the people of God," "the flock of the Shepherd," "the soldiery of the Divine Captain," the temple whose stones are living souls. To-day it lives, having seen empires come and go, and legions of enemies rise in fierce hatred only to fall away again before its strange and unearthly persistence. And this community, this human organism, with the Risen Christ as its animating principle and source of its exhaustless energy, is spreading over whole races of man more quickly and rapidly than ever. The mighty drama between human and divine wills is being played out before our own eyes and through our own hearts. None is touched by or touches this body but is put into immediate connection with values and forces which are infinite, eternal, and divine. It is the poetry of human history, because it lifts each

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human soul through imagination, intuition, and faith, through hate of sin and love of perfection, into contact with God Himself.

3. The Church of Christ is being studied more and more as an ethical force, and here again it not only excels all other religious organisations, such as the Hindu or Buddhist or Mohammedan religions have created, but sets itself in a peculiar relation with the most fundamental human institutions, such as the family and the State. Even in its earliest days, as the New Testament proves so abundantly, the young community felt that new light had been thrown upon all the essential elements of human social experience. Yet no formal programme of reconstruction was announced. There is a reserve about the original Christian teachers which is almost a proof of their inspiration or divine guidance. They do not declare an open war upon slavery or the autocracy of the Empire. They do not sketch out an ideal commonwealth, nor even an ideal Christian Church. With a superhuman wisdom they are confined to the discussion of principles which underlie all organisation, or of individual and local problems in whose right solution later generations find guidance for situations and perplexities no human intellect could possibly have conceived of in Apostolic times. But it is remarkable to watch the sane judgment, the keen and delicate insight of these disciples of Jesus. While they do not speculate about the nature of the virtues, they name them, possess them in their

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hearts, practise them in their lives. A light seems to shine upon the moral universe which reveals to them right and wrong, truth and lie, the pure and the impure in concrete cases, as no human eyes had ever seen them before. So have we beheld perhaps a sudden burst of sunshine fall through a sky of black clouds upon an island set in dark and sullen waters. With startling clearness and in unnatural detail each stone and twig and leaf is picked out and defined. The dull rocks gleam and the pine trees stand out in unwonted glory. So did the heavenly light fall upon the Church enisled in that hostile heathen world, and all virtues and all graces shone radiant and real before the men whose Redeemer and Master was Christ.

(1) The purely ethical force of Christianity arises and can only arise from the ethical conditions under which its local churches as social institutions are gathered together. What their members are to one another is the leaven which is transforming the social structure of the world. No mere preaching about virtue from those untutored lips could have moved the Empire with the sense of a changed moral atmosphere. No formal exposition or philosophy of righteousness could have done it. The Epistles of Paul derived all their ethical power from the fact that they were addressed to communities which were already organised on the Christian basis. The moral function of these letters was to elucidate and make evident to each Church the real meaning of its existence as a community which



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was established on a new moral basis. If a missionary were to invade a Chinese village to-day with a startling programme of social and moral reform, and seek first to convince the people of the value of that programme in the abstract and of its practical nature, he could receive nothing but misunderstanding and hostility. What he does as a Christian evangelist is to form a community upon the basis of a new relationship of each individual with God in Christ. That Christian community contains in its very structure a moral and social programme of changes so vast that only a few Christian communities have yet caught glimpses of their real meaning, and no country in Christendom has yet felt their full force.

(2) We can here do little more than name a few of the conditions of membership in the Christian community which have exerted most influence upon social ideals and practice.

(a) All men are viewed by the gospel as equal in their need of the divine salvation, and as equal in their capacity for receiving it. This position may be affirmed here in spite of the fact that some people, on so-called psychological grounds, have lately maintained that men have varied capacities for religious experience, that some were born to be devout and some born to be inevitably secular or sensual in their minds. This is an unexpected revival of hyper-Calvinism, and may be left out of consideration here. The New Testament offers the divine mercy to all, and charges all with personal responsi-



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bility for obedience or disobedience to its challenge and its call. This means that in respect of salvation, *i.e.* of the ultimate valuation which God puts upon human lives and His exertion of power upon them, the outward social distinctions between man and man have no place at all. We may still count a general higher than a private soldier for purposes of war, a king does occupy a more exalted station than a subject, a man of culture is preferable for some reasons to a man of simple education ; but these distinctions are of partial and temporary significance. They have no bearing upon the right or power of a man to be in the Church of Christ, nor do they afford any clue to his standing before God in the day of his judgment.

(b) And yet the Christian religion did from the first appeal to and stimulate the intelligence of all who came under its influence. Just because it revealed a God acting in history, history acquired a new reality and attraction. The past was not henceforth to be considered as merely past and done with, if a deed of God on a definite day and place is the salvation of all generations. The nations were not to be any longer superficially regarded as having wholly separate interests, if one who is the Son of Man is the Redeemer and Lord of all. And not the past ages only, but the invisible universe also comes within the ken and is faced by the quickened conscience of the man who would deal with God as God deals with him, through the risen and reigning Christ. The material for a philosophy is here

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which shall surpass that of any pre-Christian school, and yet it is presented to the mind of the humblest with inspiring and ennobling effect. It gives every man a new and intense interest in the world around him. The Roman Empire becomes a definite object of thought, of *critical* thought, of moral consideration, in an entirely new manner to soldier and civilian, Roman and Phrygian alike. Moreover, it was felt from the first that the exercise of this intelligence was one of the conditions of salvation. Hence the Apostles became teachers, and made arrangements everywhere for systematic instruction.

To-day throughout the world it is not secular prosperity, but the Christian gospel, which is the most powerful promoter and the most ardent friend of universal education. The Church has in this as in other matters by no means proved itself infallible. It has made many and even disastrous mistakes. Its lessons have not all been learnt yet, and through many a bitter struggle on this question it must press on in every land under heaven. But it remains true now as at the beginning of its days, that of all human interests the Christian religion can least afford to ignore the task of quickening intelligence, and bringing each human mind face to face with the divine meaning of the universe as a whole and the history of man. The spreading work of this universal religion is the one guarantee we have that at last all human beings shall be able at least to read the Word of Life for themselves.

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(c) The mode by which the Christian religion has cleared the moral vision and strengthened the moral character of various races is to be found in the mutual relations of its members, and in its influence upon the ideal of family life. When people of the most diverse races, social conditions, and personal character were brought together in the early churches, entirely new demands were made upon them. They must actually learn to love each other, and this love must be expressed in all kinds of deeds. They must trust each other, and so learn to practise utter truthfulness in their mutual conduct. They must serve each other, primarily in spiritual and therefore in all other affairs. They must, in fact, feel and live as a pure and strong and happy brotherhood. Where the outer world, or individuals in it, heard of this new kind of social life it felt the thrill of its ideal beauty. In spite of the usual foul suspicions which were spread through every city about the evil purposes of their secret assemblies, suspicions which did much to inflame the spirit of persecution, it did become known that "these Christians loved one another" in a pure and noble and novel manner of love; and defenders of the Christian cause like Tertullian were able to appeal to the generous charities and chaste lives of the Christians as to facts well known, though poorly weighed by their unjust judges and political enemies.

One of the foundations of all Christian morality is to be found in the command of an Apostle, "Honour



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all men." It forbade all contempt for any race or any class of human beings. It endowed with deeper meanings and inspired with a universal efficacy the brilliant saying of a heathen writer, that "Man is a sacred fact for man." The sanctity could now be seen and felt by others than meditative philosophers living remote from sordid lives. It rose to view with faith in the Redeemer and His Cross, in the Father and His love, in the Spirit and His universal appeal. That word, and such pieces as the letter of the Apostle Paul to Philemon, were revelations of a new force in human history which shall not cease from its working until slavery in every form is shattered, and deliberate injustice or selfish greed is universally despised by the human heart. We see not yet this long task accomplished. Some are disheartened because results have been so slow, and others are contemptuous as though it were not the Spirit of Christ in His Church that has secured even the meagre victories of the past. But neither class has a right to their judgment either of disappointment or of scorn. The work is long and complex, because human society is so deeply entangled in sin and social wrong, and because the Spirit of Christ has no better medium through which to work than the obscured vision and imperfect faith and unclear consciences of such men as we are to-day in the Church of to-day. But the work which has been done is great indeed. Many sins lurk only in corners of Christian cities which flaunt in the very temples and the open streets of heathendom. Some



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forms of slavery are for evermore rendered impossible, and others are being tracked to their origins and await their doom. Above all, ideals of justice, of freedom, of brotherhood, of purity are earnestly cherished and publicly propagated, which are only the offspring of that new life planted in the Church of Christ by the indwelling presence of God Himself.

### II. THE BIBLE

We have already said that the Christian faith has been perpetuated in history by two institutions,—the Church and the Bible. In making a brief statement about the latter we must perforce begin by emphasising the use of that word “institution.” A piece of writing which is nothing more than the expression of individual feeling or opinion is not in the true sense an institution, however excellent may be its literary qualities or crucial its place in the history of thought. But if a piece of writing becomes the controller of a communal life, it takes on the form of a living institution. Such a document as the Constitution of the United States, or such a work as the Koran, is an institution in this sense. It holds an inner, organic, formal relation to the organised life of a society of men. Of this class of works is the Bible. It rose out of the intense and progressive religious life and experience of Israel and the nascent Christian Church. But it came rapidly and indeed necessarily to be regarded as something more than the

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record of a spiritual history, whose significance lay wholly in the past, or the expression of personal ideals and attainments. It was, and it is, felt to be necessary for the religious experience of all races in all times to come. The reason lies in the conviction that the Bible describes acts of God upon the hearts and minds of men which were of such a kind as to create or open the way of communion with Him for every child of man. A divine purpose lies in the religious story of Israel and in the birth of the Christian Church, which takes up the record of these into itself and makes that record an instrument of God's dealings with all following generations.

This comes out most clearly in the case of the New Testament. When the Spirit came upon the Apostolic Church, and its full and real life began, an essential condition of that life was the witness of the Apostles. The vital importance of this lay in the double fact that they had been chosen by Jesus as the inner circle of His disciples, to whom He most fully unfolded His mind and the power of His Person, and that they had been chosen to see and recognise and commune with Him after the Resurrection. These relations with Jesus Christ can never be repeated. They are absolutely unique, and for the existence of the Church they are absolutely essential. By a supreme act of God's selecting grace and power the Apostle Paul was added to this group. He had received a form of preparation which has proved no less vital for the Church's experi-

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ence and faith than that which consisted in following the earthly ministry of Jesus ; and to him who was the chief enemy, the most convinced and instructed and determined persecuter of the Church, the Risen Christ had appeared in a manner of peculiar significance. He ever after knew himself, and the Apostolic Church confessed him, to be an organ of the Spirit of God for the apprehension, dissemination, and interpretation of the gospel of salvation.

The earliest churches were founded by or were immediately guided by these Apostles. Wherever they went it was felt that their teaching had an authority which could be possessed by no other. Hence their oral accounts of the ministry, death, and resurrection of Christ became speedily arranged into forms convenient for the memory, and were also written down and became the basis of our Four Gospels (see Luke i. 1-4). Their addresses to the non-Christian world are preserved for us only in the meagre though most precious records of the Book of Acts. But as the Church increased in numbers and power, and as the Apostles extended their journeys, it became necessary for them to send letters—some of them formal, some of an informal character—to individuals and communities. These were probably copied very freely, and circulated more or less widely from the beginning. As the apostolic age drew to an end, and especially in the next, the sub-apostolic stage of history, we find many half-pathetic and yet fervid references to the teaching of the Apostles,

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as being ever essential to the continued existence of the Church. But signs soon appeared that oral tradition, even in the "unforgetting East," is at best a precarious record of the past. It is always plastic to the touch of the human spirit, which receives, moulds, and transmits it. Hence vigorous steps were taken to gather, identify, and preserve the writings of the Apostles.

We cannot here enter into any of the innumerable perplexing problems which arise from the effort to re-tell the story of the New Testament canon. We must be content with having stated thus briefly the impulses which brought it into existence. And here it is. Criticism has not yet proved that its account of the rise of the gospel is not to be trusted, or that the vast majority of these writings did not come from the teaching and direct authority of the first circle of Apostles. It is for us to-day what the oral witness of the Apostles was in Judea and Syria, in Galatia and Macedonia, in Athens and Rome. It brings us into immediate personal contact with the creative acts of God, by which for us and for our salvation He sent His own Son into the world, and appointed Him to die, and raised Him from the dead, and gave Him in the outpouring of His Spirit to be the Saviour and Lord of all who believe in Him. But there are three things which we may add about the New Testament, and which may serve to knit together what has already been set down :

(1) In the first place, the question which has troubled some theologians as to whether the organised Church



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or the Bible is supreme is really irrelevant. They are institutions which both arose out of the experience and witness and work of the Apostles of Christ. They are both organs of the Spirit of God, and they are therefore organically related to and dependent on one another. As we cannot conceive the gospel of Christ taking hold of human history without creating its own community, destined to cover the earth and to bring forth everywhere out of the old and perishing race the new and real and final form of humanity, so we cannot conceive of it without that primal witness of the Apostles, that original and originating statement of the gospel, which alone could authenticate the truth for all coming generations. The Bible is merely the preservation of the apostolic witness to the origin and nature of the gospel; the Church is the solid organism created through that witness. In modern days we have learnt to use what seem to us deeper words about these facts than our fathers knew. We cannot think of the Church as a mere association, nor as an organisation, with its officials exactly and formally defined in function and relation and title for all circumstances and all ages. Nor can we think of the Bible as a kind of legal document, whose words taken separately are capable of direct application to the details of every human life and the variations of human thought. Each of these institutions is of a living nature. It grew from the witness of the Apostles and from the presence and power of the Spirit of Christ in that witness.

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(2) In the second place, the facts which are before us constitute the Bible as the supreme authority for faith and practice among Christians. The nature of authority in general, and its particular seat or seats in the Christian religion, is a large and intricate topic. Suffice it to say that that only can be an ultimate authority for the faith and practice of Christians which brings them even in the most widely separated fields of thought and conduct under the supreme power of the Saviour and Lord of man. Nothing does this as the witness of His Apostles preserved for all generations in the New Testament has done it from the first day until now. After historical study has done its utmost to trace the literary history of these documents, to discover the various forms of secular culture which played upon the minds of their authors, they are still there in the form which they have possessed since the end of the apostolic period. No other can tell us what the gospel is with a more authoritative voice than they. Beyond them we can appeal to none higher to tell us what God did in Christ to create this new life in human experience, to bind the sinful in peace and faith, in love and hope, to His own heart of mercy and of power. To know how and why we may trust in the Fatherhood of God, how and why we may best spend our swift lives in the fulfilment of His abiding and eternal will, we must all at last depend on those pages as on no other word or institution which all the ages of endeavour have produced. Over and over again the Church has

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found that here, in this book of the first witnesses to Christ, it has the means by which its false developments may be corrected, its thoughts may be restrained from conclusions which are fatal to the power of Christ, its conduct may be brought back to the test of a divine purity and an eternal righteousness. By appeal to it Athanasius in one century and Augustine in the next, whatever imperfections clung to their teaching, saved the Church from the threatening inundations of heathenism. By reopening its fountains and letting them flow upon various portions of Europe, Francis of Assisi and Luther (how different their methods and spirit!) both gave men to taste again a little of the airs of that first glorious springtide when the Prince of life made the Apostles radiant with the joy and power of God's delivering grace.

(3) The Bible is, then, the permanent instrument of the Spirit of God. Wherever it goes the fruit of the Spirit begins to appear among men. That is why in the last century of world-wide missions it has been translated into more than four hundred languages. That is why no mission is felt to be complete, though it have hospitals and meeting-houses, charities and teachings, unless it has planted the Bible in the life of the people. There is here again something mystical which we may all see and feel and cherish, though it be hard to name and impossible to define. Some speak with scorn of bibliolatry, and urge that the Bible be reduced to the level of other books if we would save

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the world from a new form of superstition. And truly we must not be superstitious or foolish or irrational in the place which we assign to it in the life of the Church and in relation to our faith. But yet this book does stand related to the Spirit of God and to the faith and destiny of man in a manner which is without comparison or rivalry. Through it He still speaks to mankind. Its pages still glow with a personal appeal which comes from the throne of the universe to the individual heart and conscience. God has made it most truly and powerfully His word in which a second time, as it were, He is incarnate for the apprehension and obedience of mankind. These ancient writings contained the message which He breathed into the souls of His beloved Apostles, selected for this very purpose; and through them, as we read them, He moves still among men.

This Bible is part of the secret by which original Christianity remains final, and by its means the original gospel is being carried to the whole creation.



## CHAPTER IX

### THE MISSIONARY IMPULSE

IN preceding chapters we have been studying the nature of the Christian religion, so as to discover the nature of its claim to be the absolute religion, and the relation of that claim to its missionary function. In it we see not so much man finding God by his own outreaching towards the Divine, as God revealing Himself in His personal relations and purposes towards man by acts of transcendent meaning and power. Those acts of God, when they take effect upon the human soul, become the substance of Christian experience. When they are considered in their historic setting and in their cosmic significance, they determine the distinctively Christian view of God and the world; they constitute Christian doctrine and the Christian message. What we have now to consider more closely is the fact that these Christian truths, when accepted and obeyed most fully and intelligently, have from the first created the missionary impulse. That impulse takes form in the individual as a mighty desire to make known to others the gospel which he has experienced, and which he believes that God gave to the world. It is the reflection in his will of the revealed will of God towards man.

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Nothing seems to him so great, so worthy of a man's life, as this effort to make the Christian faith prevail over all hearts, and transfigure all lives throughout the world. That for which God has loved humanity he believes that he knows, and he yields himself as the instrument of this sublime, this divine purpose.

But each man has approached the gospel on his own feet, along his own path, and each man will give his own account of his missionary impulse. For when one explains or defends any impulse from which he acts, he does so always by changing it into a reason. He seeks, as it were, to universalise his personal feeling, to see it in that system of life in which he is involved with other reasonable beings. Hence those who are acting under this great Christian impulse will be found always to explain the dedication of their lives by linking their will in that act with some one or more aspects of the Christian system. The greatest and wisest among them will give many reasons, but all their reasons will be found to lie not in a mere feeling, but out there in the Christian system as they see it, and in its relation to humanity.

It must be our task now to deal with some, the most important, of these explanations of the Christian missionary impulse.

### I. THE PROPAGATION OF LIFE

We may begin with one explanation which has no doubt unconsciously swayed multitudes, namely, the

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fundamental impulse to propagate life. We are told in the Fourth Gospel of the woman who, "when she is delivered, remembereth no more the anguish, for the joy that a man—a *human being*—is born into the world." There is the deep racial instinct at work, without which no child could be loved, without which mankind could not endure. It is remarkable that in the New Testament the missionary impulse allies itself with this instinct. It has been pointed out above how soon and how powerfully the early Christians conceived of themselves as belonging to a new race, not Roman or Greek or Jewish, nor a mere conglomerate of these, but a race as real as any other, yet embracing children of them all. "Ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession" (1 Pet. ii. 9). St. Paul speaks still more boldly when he declares that Christ has overcome the opposition between Jew and Gentile, "that He might create in Himself of the two one new man" (Eph. ii. 15). The Apostles felt that they were most intimately concerned with the work of bringing the new race into actual being. It is something more than a mere effusion of tenderness, it is the consciousness of a vital and mystic relation between his converts and himself, which St. Paul sometimes described in most daring language (Gal. iv. 19; 1 Th. ii. 7, 11; 1 Cor. iv. 14-17; 2 Cor. vi. 13; Philem. 10; 1 Tim. i. 2; 2 Tim. i. 2; Titus i. 4; cf. 1 John ii. 1; 3 John 4). To him the family of God was most real; the eternal life was no mere future state, but a present

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power. And he saw and felt that those over whom he laboured, and who entered into that life, into that supreme family relationship, through his prayers and his teaching, stood for ever as in a sense the offspring of his spirit. All true ministers have entered into this joy in their own measure. And many have gone out into the work of evangelists under this most sacred and deep impulse, yearning to communicate the great new life beating in their own hearts, to see it spring up in other lives.

### II. LOYALTY TO CHRIST

The supreme, explicit reason for the missionary impulse may best be summed up in the words, "loyalty to Christ." We have already seen that in the Christian faith He sits supreme, the Redeemer in whose great sacrifice of love, the love of the Almighty and eternal God for each human being is opened upon man's vision and breaks in upon his heart. He is also the Lord, the Leader or Captain of the Christian community, which is knit together by the will to do His will, to follow out his purposes towards mankind.

1. *The Purpose of Christ.*—The one word in which the purpose of Christ is summed up is—"to bring men to God." That was the mind which was in Him when He laid aside the form of God and became incarnate, when he girt His human will for obedience, "yea even unto the death of the Cross." The same mind is in Him to-day as His very Spirit works in human history.



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His will is to bring men unto God. As one who has accepted Christ's leadership, with all it means, gazes directly and intently upon that will, the missionary spirit is stirred in him. As he looks from the foot of that kingly throne at which he kneels day by day out upon the world, as he realises that the eyes of his King are watching with an infinite and eternal love all those teeming sons of men, he finds his own heart reflecting that divine passion of desire, his own will gradually directed and finally determined simply to live for Christ's own end, to bring men to the love of God the Father. When that has taken place the Christian man is naturally and inevitably led to regard it as the call of Christ to himself. Without superstitious waiting for voices or outward signs, he receives the certainty that loyalty to Christ means the mission field for him; just as at an earlier day he discovered that his faith in Christ was God's gift, that it was the seal of his personal salvation set upon his own will by the Spirit of the Eternal.

2. *The Cross*.—The man whom this view of the will of Christ has begun to move mightily finds it throwing a bright light upon the whole work of Christ as the Redeemer and Lord of men. With a new fascination he regards the gospel story in which what we may call the universality of the consciousness of Jesus stands revealed. While He confined his own earthly ministry to the boundaries of the Jewish people, He yet dealt with them on broad and human grounds. He did not limit His call "Come unto Me" to the children of

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Israel. He did not say, "Every *Jew* that confesseth Me before men, him will I also confess before My Father which is in heaven." He did not say, "The Son of man came . . . to give His life a ransom for all who are already loyal to Moses." In all such sayings Jesus set Himself in relation with human nature as such. He makes us see and feel that He was dealing with the fundamental relations of the whole race with God. He evidently intended to teach and labour, to suffer and rise again, "that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name unto all the nations" (Luke xxiv. 46, 47). It is therefore impossible for any one intelligently to look upon the Cross of Christ in its individual, without looking upon it also in its universal, aspect. No man dare say, "He loved me and gave Himself up for me," without remembering that all men have the same right to use those words; and no one man can use them fully of himself while in his spirit he denies them to any class or race of man. Before that Cross, as we have already seen, all geographical, racial, educational, social obstructions vanish. It is the universal human situation which it deals with, and each man who finds it applied to his own case has looked into the depth and height, as it were, of the heart of Christ as He willed on the Cross to change the relations of man and God.

3. *His Great Command*.—But loyalty to Christ attaches itself not only to the leadership of Christ on his throne, directing the history of His Church out-

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wards upon the race, not only to that will of His in the wonderful days of his flesh, as He moved towards the Cross, it also bows in reverence before His explicit words. No one who believes in the fact of the Resurrection can reasonably doubt that the Gospels have preserved in varying forms of words His direct and final command to His disciples to proclaim His gospel to the whole race. "Go ye therefore and make disciples of all the nations" (Matt. xxviii. 18-20); "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel unto the whole creation" (Mark xvi. 15; cf. Luke xxiv. 25-27, 44-49; John xx. 19-23). The missionary nature of the Christian religion lies, as we have seen, in its very nature, and many of the most thoughtful and powerful missionaries have felt the impulse arise within them, as they found themselves personally related to that Divine Person and the virtues of His redeeming work, and as they saw into the white and burning centre of that love of His for all men. But the missionary Church is right to set those explicit words emblazoned on high as the formal charter of its world-wide and endless empire. From the lips of the Risen Lord they fell. They uttered His will, expressed once for all and for ever the consciousness which filled His mind and will no less in the dark depths of Gethsemane than on the Mount of the Ascension. They formally sealed that, His consciousness, upon the consciousness of those men as the law of the Church's very being. Before the larger community was gathered together, before the first word of witness was borne from believers

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to those who knew not the God-wrought story of salvation, before the first table of communion was set up or the first convert to the Christian faith was baptized, the Lord of the Church wrote upon its primary group the nature and the end of their existence as His Church. And loyalty to Christ to-day is summed up, for an increasing number of souls, in direct obedience to those supreme words through which alike the mission of the Church and the destiny of the world stand revealed in their mutual dependence: "Preach the Gospel to the whole creation."

### III. THE NATURE OF CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE

We come to a third ray of light which falls upon the missionary impulse. We have seen it as the energy of the new life which animates the Christian community, and as the expression of individual loyalty to Christ, the Redeemer and Master of mankind, for fulfilment of His purpose and obedience to His command. It is also quickened by the conditions and nature of that experience which we have studied.

1. *The Gospel a Social Fact.*—It is important here to recall the fact that this is in no sense a purely private experience. Personal or individual we must call it, for here individuality is realised in a manner and to an intensity of degree which no other human relationship or conduct makes possible. There is a true and deep sense in which, when the gospel seizes a man's soul, it



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reveals his personality to himself, and creates new ranges and qualities of individuality within him. A man is never fully the man he was designed and intended and called to become until his personal nature is united with, filled out, and completed by union with God in Christ. But while this is true, the other side must not be forgotten. The gospel is a social fact. To us all it comes through the mediation of the Christian community. That community produced and has disseminated the Scriptures, the witness of the primary Christians to the nature of the gospel. That community, multi-form now beyond our description, through some human agency brought that witness to our doors, urged it upon our consciences, instilled its truths into our minds. The gospel is a social fact, received by the individual through and in the midst of a community—a small group, or even one messenger it may be, representing the vast Church of God, the whole body of living and faithful souls who confess the Name of Christ. It streams to him, indeed, from God's own Spirit, an inward personal act of God upon himself, with elements in it which are his very own, alone, and can belong to none other. But it streams to him also at first and at last through others, through the written page of Scripture and the preacher's voice, through the intercession of the Church and its praises, through its symbols of ceremonial and sacrament. It is a debt which each man owes to other men.

2. *The Inner Meaning of Mercy.*—We may go even

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deeper into the experience of the mercy of God. That mercy, immeasurable, inexplicable, descends upon the individual as a gift offered to all. When modern evangelists use with inexhaustible effect the old words "whosoever will," their effort is to get men to see in that phrase the strange interblending of the universal and the particular. "Whosoever" is a distributive word which seems to isolate a man and deal with him singly. But the gospel message so isolates, or would isolate, every man without exception. It is out of that glorious universal call that the overwhelming individual appeal at last reaches the inner seat of the heart and the will. I do not understand mercy till I have seen it directed upon me, but I could not so see it until it shine before me and above me like an encircling and universal sky embracing all human beings in its blessed light. Even here, then, in the lonely hour when remission of his own sins is granted to each man, he owes it to the fact that he belongs to the race upon which the mercy of God has fallen.

The divine mercy is then something which can be truly understood in its individual application only when it is seen in its general intention. Each man must meet the will of God as He directs His grace upon all men. He must see its wonder, its searching beauty, its merciless exposure of all sin, and its merciful wiping out of all guilt, in order to grasp that grace for himself. In the very act of accepting mercy he must feel mercy—"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy."

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But who can thus truly see the "wideness of God's mercy," and who can thus appreciate it as the source of his personal salvation and object of his personal faith, without feeling the impulse to convey it unto others? If I can only receive a boon for myself because it is intended for all, how can I avoid the wish, or stifle the will, that it shall reach all because it has reached me? The very sense of a baffling and inscrutable Providence which overwhelms one when he asks the unanswerable question, why this word of grace has come to him and not to one thousand million other persons in the world to-day, ought to arouse in him the determination to do something that the word may spread from heart to heart till all the world is leavened with that grace. The missionary impulse springs from the experience of personal salvation, because when a man enters upon this experience he does so as a child of the race.

### IV. THE WORLD AND ITS NEED

We have seen the missionary impulse as it arises from the energy of the new life, from loyalty to Christ, from the innermost implications of the experience of salvation. We must try to understand how it is related with the world when looked at in the light of the gospel.

1. *The Meaning of Humanity.*—The coming of Christ and His Spirit changed the meaning of the word humanity. There had been among Greek and Roman thinkers some insight into the unity of mankind, but it had not

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been deep and true enough to create a new and permanent personal attitude. A Roman poet did say, "Nothing human is foreign to my interest," and the thrilling word must be ever welcome to our hearts. It was a foregleam of that full sunlight which the gospel of Christ alone has shed abroad upon the human race. We must admit, of course, that even in Christendom, race prejudice still holds our hearts in bondage. They are few and rare souls, indeed, of whom it can be said, that none of the distinctions among men which arise from colour, or social standing, affect their conduct or even their feelings toward their fellowmen. But it is a matter of supreme meaning that, in spite of that fact, the missionary impulse is sending people all over the world who are determined to see and act upon humanity in every child of the race, and pour something of the love of God through their own hearts upon the lowest members of the race. The vast works of philanthropy, which involve close fellowship and even intimacy with the pitiable objects upon whom their redeeming efforts are spent, would be impossible unless a new power had appeared to make that other Roman saying about the "sacredness of man" more clear and more real than it was to the philosophic and superior Stoic of old.

(1) *One Race*.—In the *first place*, modern philosophy, as well as modern studies in history and ethnology, have not only compelled us to say that mankind is one race, they have revealed to us the greatness of the nature which we call human. Something of the infinite



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seems to be suggested by all the central powers of man. Reason, ever growing in its grasp of the outward word, and withal, holding infinite ideals in its grasp ; conscience, claiming the authority to utter the laws of a rational universe ; imagination, a glowing fire from which warmth and beauty are flung out upon the coldest seas and the most distant star ; love, which even in the dullest heart may suddenly wake to utter its claims of endless life, indignant at the separating grave,—all these and any other power which may belong to man as man possess a dignity, suggest a glory not to be measured in earthly terms. These forms of knowledge cannot discover man's actual destiny, but they show us man's capacity for some great destiny. They describe to us a nature, "heaven's consummate cup," so nobly planned that we must not only admire it as it is, but expect some greater thing from it and of it, which no eye has seen nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man to conceive it.

(2) *The Revealed Destiny*.—In the second place, while philosophy sets man *sub facie æternitatis*, discloses that he is fashioned for an infinite end, that end cannot be defined. The eternity of which Philosophy speaks remains an empty form. It has no describable substance. It may say with Kant that man must pursue the good will as an infinite and for ever unattainable goal. It may tell us that man is pursuing "the pathway to reality" or perfecting "individuality." But none of these terms, valuable in their place, can give to the

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capacity of a man, a concrete achievement which immediately glows with substantial reality. Philosophy can neither lift history above time nor drag its eternal goal down and set it there ardent, mystic, actual to win our love and dominate the whole movement of our living energy. Christianity alone has ever professed to satisfy this need. It has set humanity *sub facie Christi*. Now the face of Christ is at once a historical and an eternal fact. In Him the infinite good has suddenly become actual in history. The perfectly good will, conscious of its triumph, the final individuality, conscious of its perfect reality, is there in Him. The Christian man, knowing Christ, knows what is to be made of man. The meaning of our nature stands revealed in Him whose love led Him to the Cross and whose power lifted Him from the dead to the throne of God. There the cup of human nature stands, fashioned gloriously, with the very life of God filling it full.

(a) For one thing, man was the object of the love of Jesus even in His earthly life. No one has put the meaning of this more beautifully than the author of *Ecce Homo* : " Of this race Christ Himself was a member, and to this day is it not the best answer to all blasphemers of the species, the best consolation when our sense of its degradation is keenest, that a human brain was behind His forehead and a human heart beating in His breast, and that within the whole creation of God nothing more elevated or more attractive has yet been

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found than He ? . . . And yet He associated by preference with these meanest of the race. . . . There is nothing of which a man may be prouder than this ; it is the most hopeful and redeeming fact in history ; it is precisely what was wanting to raise the love of man as man to enthusiasm. An eternal glory has been shed upon the human race by the love Christ bore to it."

We must add, of course, that the love of Christ for man reached its perfect as well as its most mysterious expression in His sacrifice on the Cross. If man's measureless guilt in His view made that most dreadful deed of His will upon His own heart necessary, He performed it because He saw in man that which was worthy of being redeemed. Man's original power to receive the life through the love divine must be restored at any cost, that the eternal will of his Creator may be done. This joy was before Jesus when He endured the Cross, despising shame. This joy of His drops into the heart of His disciple as the impulse of the missionary and the philanthropist.

(b) The man who gives himself to Christian service, if by any means he may save some, is one who has caught a glimpse of the infinite value of the human soul. That glance of its glory may be connected with a study of its capacities, but it came primarily from the revelation of the intention of God. The cup exists not for itself ; it is beautifully fashioned in base and rim for uses of a cup, for the joy of Him at whose feast

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of love it is destined to serve. The infinite value of human nature is suggested by its religious capacity ; it is revealed and made sure in the whole work of God in Christ and in the descriptions of that eternal kingdom, that family of God, that host of the redeemed, that temple in which God is revealed, that city in which his own Light stands, which our Lord and His Apostles gave to the world. Many an eager saintly spirit, brooding over this will of God, has been fired with the passion to open that world of hope to the bewildered souls that know not how great they are, nor how near, when Christ is named, stands the infinite measure and assurance of their destiny.

2. *The Dreadful Need of Humanity.*—Over against the world in its splendid capacity we must fix our eyes steadfastly on the world in its dreadful need. As we have already seen, the very history of man's religious endeavours is a most pathetic witness to "something wrong" at the very root of his life. Splendid indeed have been many of his religious aspirations, inspiring have been many of his words uttered in moments of true and deep insight. But everywhere we find proof that his striving for God has been deflected and defeated by some other force in his nature and experience. What barbarities and tortures has he not inflicted in the name of his gods and for their approval ! What extremes of anguish has he not endured as proofs at once of his insatiable appetite for some supreme good and of his inveterate tendency to mix it with iniquity !



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And nowhere has he found a true and lasting peace. The enlightenment of Buddha was only partial and incapable in its original form, still more so in its later developments, of conferring that glorious and positive sense of triumph, that possession of the pardon of God, that assurance of life everlasting, which the consummate religion can only bestow.

The Christian man knows, as he regards even the history of religion, that he is looking on the desolation of sin. It has clouded man's vision, it has blocked his way, it has oppressed his heart. The sense of right undone, of wrong accomplished, is not peculiar to the higher civilisations. An accusing conscience casts its shadow throughout the world upon the human spirit. It underlies all legislation and government, it reared every altar of expiation, it sang every dirge of hopeless woe. To quell it man has put on the garments of joy, but the flowers always wither. He has tried to simulate the peace it had shattered, to despise the victory of the grave, to be content with pleasure of the senses, to cage his infinite yearnings within the bars of time and circumstance, even to torment and mutilate his poor body that his spirit might have peace. But always in vain. "I ought" is a feeling that woke up in man's breast when he first sought the Divine; it woke with the pang of remorse, and the pang has survived all devices, save only the Cross of Christ.

But the Christian man of to-day is peculiarly sensitive to the fact that the desolation of sin is no mere inward

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and secret sorrow of the religious soul. It appears outwardly in all the wrongs that infest the relationships of men. True it is, as we have seen, that sin is the misuse of appetites and impulses seated in man's original nature, and themselves sinless. But the fact of the desolation is spread over the whole of human history. The lust of the flesh and the pride of the spirit, the passion for power and the will to deceive, have worked in all races. They have reared empires on the graves and crushed hearts of conquered races ; and they have undermined and cast the same empires down into the dust. In our day, even in Christian lands, the social desolation of man has evoked the zeal of all reformers, and sent whole armies into the highways of social service. The Christian man, believing that until the broken relations with God are set right, until the state of sin is removed, these desolations must persist, gives himself to the service of that gospel which deals first with sin that it may cleanse the fountainhead of greed and self-will, of passion and crime. He knows that he is working at the root of all social evil when he seeks to bring the conscience to that peace of God, in whose light righteousness shines clear and in whose merciful love the heart of man learns the love of man.

3. *The Doom of Impenitence.*—There is another view of the situation which was more emphasised in a former day than in our own, and which we may describe as the doom of impenitence. It would be right to say, perhaps, that the error of that former time lay not so

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much in mere exaggeration of this peril of the human soul, but in its isolation. It is not the sole fact nor the whole truth about man. But it is assuredly one element or aspect of his condition which it is mere blindness not to see, and sheer folly not to treat with appropriate energy and awe. No book throws so bright a light upon the destiny of man as the Bible, but the corresponding shadow is proportionately dreadful and dark. It was Jesus who so loved man as we have seen, who could be so broad and generous and even genial in His treatment of the facts before Him in the multi-form interests of human society, who yet could utter the words of most astounding and even of appalling severity. It was He who used the word "lost," and He allowed no exceptions to be made in its application. That is enough. He saw multitudes living without God, some openly, some as the hypocrites. He saw the possibility of a final impenitence. He and His Apostles have taught us that the children of darkness may prefer that darkness when the intensest light of God is shining straight upon their hearts and minds. The wondrous charity of the New Testament which recognises that in every nation he who worketh righteousness is accepted of God, must not paralyse but quicken the missionary impulse. For surely if men are to be judged according to their light, they will do better in a brighter light. Surely if in all heathen religions there is expressed in some measure man's hunger for the divine, they who have the secret of that

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true Bread of Life must take it to them, lest they fail to find it. Surely if the will may become impenitent, it ought to have every chance, which the very grace of God can give it, to turn unto righteousness and repent and live. This religious view of man's situation, as one of infinite danger, led Jesus to the Cross and sent forth all the great heralds of His salvation to the ends of the earth.

Two final observations must be made :

1. In the first place, the missionary impulse is composed of two elements, the sense of a supreme compassion and the feeling of an overwhelming debt. The *pity* is born in a man's heart from the new love of God and from his new insight, which that very love makes clear and poignant, into man's dreadful need. The *debt* is felt to be a debt of honour. No institution can enforce it. No human being can judge his neighbour in respect of the manner and amount of its payment. It rests upon every man's honour to see it and weigh it and pay it. It may be put briefly in two sentences—"What I have freely received I owe to him who has it not. Especially do I owe the greatest boon to the direst need."

2. In the second place, the man who believes in the gospel of Christ with all it contains, not only of grace offered now, but of human glory prophesied hereafter, knows that he is here gazing upon the deepest form of reality. What does not belong to this life in Christ from God must pass from human experience. From this and around this must gather all that henceforth is



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to be human nature and a human world. Through Christ and His work the divine purpose with man is as it were gazing in upon our souls and challenging our confidence, our life's devotion, in the call to believe and serve the gospel. That divine purpose is the substance of man's nature and history, the final reality for which all the stages of history are but the scaffolding and the tools.

We may put it this way—All are agreed that much of what seems most solid in our experience is evanescent. Most are agreed that if anything is to last or preserve its identity for ever, and so prove itself of supreme value, it must be sought not in the physical, nor in the fitful pulses of pleasurable emotions, nor in the forms of earthly knowledge, but solely in the moral nature of man, in a good conscience, a will made one with the will of God. There you strike upon the indestructible thing, the one form of reality that must live as long as God. But here is our climax of glorious assumptions, our claim which outtops all wildest effronteries of the human spirit. We of the Christian world hold this as our fundamental conviction that only through the power of Jesus Christ is that good conscience, that unity of man's will with God's will, being actually created. This conviction is Christianity, and to deny it is to lose the whole Gospel.

The preacher and teacher, the humblest ministrant of the gospel, is working for that. He may close his eyes to all other careers, and be deaf to other praise.

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This is praise enough, and here is work sublime enough. It brought the Son of God to earth, that He might in our world produce that which when all else has vanished for ever will remain for ever—the human soul alive for ever in God.



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